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Begin joins the race

By MICHAEL YUDELMAN

MK Ze'ev (Benny) Begin announced yesterday that he is running for prime minister at the head of the new right-wing party he is forming.

His candidacy has triggered concern among right-wingers about splitting their vote, which could help the Left.

Begin said his running is imperative to stop the Oslo and Wye agreements and prevent the formation of a Palestinian state.

"To bring victory to the national camp... in the coming elections, an additional candidacy for prime minister must be presented," he said. "It's the only alternative today to the way leading clearly to a Palestinian state of the PLO and Hamas, which will bring neither security nor peace."

How do you 'sell' Begin?, Page 3

He denounced Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu's leadership as "tired, lenient, surrendering."

"This is a leadership which gave the Arabs one of their greatest achievements - smashing the national camp."

Meanwhile, in a turnabout, Foreign Minister Ariel Sharon said that under certain circumstances he might consider running for prime minister.

"There's a difference between saying, 'I don't want to be prime minister' and saying that under certain circumstances..." Sharon said on Channel 2's *Everything Is Political*.

He refused to say what he meant by "certain circumstances," but said again: "I said if the circumstances require it." When asked again, he said, "I said it clearly. Use your judgment."

There were also other signs of tension between Sharon and Netanyahu yesterday. The Prime Minister's Office expressed annoyance with Sharon after he said he could not attend the scheduled security cabinet meeting yesterday, postponing the session.

Sharon's office said that the Foreign Ministry had previously scheduled meetings he could not cancel, but that the security cabinet could have convened without him to discuss the Lebanon issue.

Tsomet leader Rafael Eitan also was reportedly planning to run for prime minister.

Dan Meridor, who last week announced his candidacy for prime minister, and former chief of General Staff Amnon Lipkin-Shahak also met yesterday.

See RACE, Page 2

Parties agree on May 17 vote

By LIAT COLLINS and NINA GILBERT

Elections for the Knesset and prime minister will probably be held on Monday, May 17, under a compromise reached last night between representatives of Labor and the Likud.

A second round of voting for prime minister, if required - that is if no candidate gets 50 percent - would take place on June 1.

The Knesset Law Committee is scheduled to discuss the proposed date today and, if endorsed, the early elections bill dissolving the Knesset will come up for second and third readings next week. It requires the support of 61 MKs to pass.

Coalition whip Meir Sheerit and Labor whip Elie Goldschmidt met several times, along with other MKs, before reaching the compromise, which was announced not long after the coalition again showed its difficulty in functioning by failing to pass the economic arrangements bill on first reading.

The vote, which had been postponed for two months, fell by a tie. Sheerit said he would resubmit the legislation today, when it must be debated again in the House. It will likely be put to a vote only next week.

As a result, the state will begin 1999 without a budget, since the passage of the bill - a host of economic reforms required for implementing the budget - is required for preparing the budget for its final readings.

After the vote, Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu told reporters: "Now you understand the problem. That is why we are going to hold elections."

Coalition members are acting irresponsibly, he said, and acting only out of their own narrow interests.

Among those involved in the discussions to set a date for the elections were Meretz whip Haim Oron, a cosponsor of the early elections bill along with Labor's Haim Ramon, and Shas's Rafael Pinhasi, who chairs the House Committee.

Shas leader Aryeh Deri was also reportedly consulted.

Goldschmidt said the May 17 date is a compromise between April 27, as Labor initially proposed, and mid-June, as the Likud suggested. At a later stage the suggested dates were May 11 by Labor and May 25 by the Likud's.

"We finally compromised on May 17, with the support of Meretz and Shas," said Goldschmidt.

He said Labor's goal was to prevent the elections from taking place at a time when hundreds of thousands of Israelis are abroad on holiday.

Goldschmidt said he and Sheerit had noted the historic nature of the date. It was in elections on May 17, 1977 that the Likud came into power for the first time.

"On the two occasions elections have taken place in May, the Likud has won," said Sheerit.

Goldschmidt, naturally, took a different view.

"I think that if there is any symbolism it is that it is a date marking an upheaval, and there will be an upheaval," Goldschmidt said.

"I hope that on May 17, 1999, Ehud Barak will replace Binyamin Netanyahu as prime minister."

But it is unlikely that who will be prime minister will be determined in the first round of voting in view of the number of candidates expected to run.

The May 17 date contradicts the tradition of holding elections on Tuesdays. The Basic Law: The Government requires special elections to be held on Tuesdays, but since the move to call the elections is through the Knesset Dissolution Law, the date can be reached by agreement.

Sheerit said it was decided to hold the elections on Monday, because Shavuot starts on the Thursday night of that week, and if elections were held Tuesday there would not be enough time to count the votes of soldiers.

Sheerit and Goldschmidt both rejected the possibility that the

date reflects the will of their party leaders to give time for Shahak's party to show cracks.

Meanwhile, Central Elections Committee director Tamar Edri said that five people have picked up the forms necessary to register as a candidate for prime minister: Labor Party leader Ehud Barak, former chief of General Staff Amnon Lipkin-Shahak, Dan Meridor, former Moledet MK Yosef Ba-Gad and Tsomet leader Rafael Eitan.

A candidate for prime minister needs either the support of 10 MKs in the outgoing Knesset or the signatures of 50,000 supporters eligible to vote.

In the vote on the arrangements bill, Absorption Minister Yuli Edelstein and his Yisrael Ba'aliya colleague Marina Solodkin abstained. Edelstein said he would not support the bill "as long as social injustices are not corrected, including updating the National Insurance Institute payments and absorption assistance grants, and housing solutions are provided to those eligible for assistance on the same level as in 1996 and 1997."

The 55-55 result was also blamed on the fact that the Likud's Avraham Herschson did not arrive in time to vote. "I was stuck in traffic," Herschson explained.

The other no-shows were Likud MKs Ze'ev (Benny) Begin, Dan Meridor, and Uzi Landau, who have all announced that they will run for prime minister, with Begin and Meridor outside of the party.

The legislation failed despite the fact that the government thought it had ensured support by first getting the Knesset to pass on first reading of a bill that would block Reform and Conservative Jews from serving on religious councils.

The legislation was due to be put to a vote two months ago, when the 1999 state budget bill passed a first reading. However, it was withdrawn by finance minister Yankov Neeman since there was no majority for its passage.

See VOTE, Page 15



MK Ze'ev (Benny) Begin announces that he is breaking away from the Likud and running for prime minister as the head of a new right-wing party, at a press conference in Tel Aviv yesterday. (AP)

Livnat is caught in the middle

ANALYSIS

By SARAH RING

In their own curious way, Revisionist true-blues Ze'ev (Benny) Begin and Uzi Landau have done Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu a great favor by challenging him from the Right.

After the visit of his new American spin-doctors, Labor Party leader Ehud Barak has been calling Netanyahu an extremist. Begin and Landau make him look moderate enough to appeal to the politically unidentified.

Moreover, both have taken care, so far, not to hurt his ultimate chances. Landau vowed to support Netanyahu if he loses.

Begin refrained from personal slurs, presumably to make it possible for national camp voters to switch to Netanyahu in the second round.

In the meantime, Netanyahu can enjoy the best of both worlds. He can make right-wing speeches to offset the memory of Wye among the more hawkish of his potential voters, while simultaneously making a pitch to the center.

Neither is Netanyahu's other declared challenger, Dan Meridor, inflicting much damage right now.

Poor Meridor is in trouble. This time his tormentor is none other than his possible future political partner - Amnon Lipkin-Shahak.

Although everyone knows about them, the two still insist on sneaking around, as if involved in a furtive, illicit assignation. Yesterday, they met on the sly again. Meridor pressed for a decision on who would head the new centrist ticket. Uncertainty can cost him dearly.

But Shahak can only gain from more mystery and doesn't mind stringing Meridor along and keeping him dangling mercilessly.

Shahak's latest line is that he will make no move before an election date is finalized.

More than Meridor's momentum is at stake. Others, like Communications Minister Limor Livnat - who has described herself as torn between the Likud and Meridor - also needs very much to know what Shahak is up to. It is one thing for her to go with Meridor and quite another to join Shahak.

For Livnat, even teaming up with Meridor is problematic, because she and Meridor come from opposite ends of the Likud spectrum. Ideologically she is akin to Begin (whom her father ardently supports).

But Begin is considered politically naive, if not an outright loser. He is heading resolutely into the opposition. Livnat is ambitious and not given to defiant displays of self-sacrifice. Her moves are calculated, which is why she must know where Meridor is headed.

See ANALYSIS, Page 3

Vote expected on bill to hinder Golan withdrawal

By NINA GILBERT and DANNA HARMAN

A bill that would prohibit relinquishing sovereign land, including Jerusalem and the Golan Heights, without the support of 61 MKs and a majority in a referendum will be brought up either today or tomorrow for first reading. The Third Way said yesterday.

Party leader Avigdor Kahalani said after yesterday's cabinet meeting that "this is the time to hasten the struggle for the Golan Heights."

The party said it decided to

bring up the bill, known as the Golan bill, as a result of the implications of a report in *Yediot Aharonot* that Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu and Labor Party leader Ehud Barak had allegedly agreed in talks to withdraw from most of the Golan Heights.

Netanyahu adamantly denied that he had reached any agreement with Barak on a Golan pullout.

In response to a question from Kahalani on reports that such an agreement had been reached during secret talks several months

ago, Netanyahu said they were "completely without foundation."

He said the only point on which he and Barak had reached agreement was on the need to renew negotiations with the Syrians, but had gone no further.

Netanyahu added that both he and former finance minister Yankov Neeman, who was present at the meeting, possess records proving that these reports - as well as those on the compulsory draft of yeshiva students - are fabricated.

See GOLAN, Page 2

US retaliates for Iraq attack

WASHINGTON (Reuters) - US fighter planes retaliated yesterday against Iraqi missiles fired in northern Iraq's no-fly zone, and President Bill Clinton vowed to continue enforcing the country's no-fly zones despite Iraqi opposition.

A US Defense Department spokesman said Iraq had attacked US jets during routine patrols of the northern no-fly zone with surface-to-air missiles from a site in northern Iraq, north of the town of Mosul.

"The air crews acted in self-defense and responded with HARM missiles and precision-guided munitions," the Defense Department spokesman said. "There was no damage to coalition aircraft, and all our crews returned safely to base [in Turkey]."

He said US forces had responded within the "normal rules of engagement" and that damage to Iraqi forces was still being assessed.

The spokesman said US pilots saw three Iraqi surface-to-air missiles fired and that British fueling aircraft backed up the US mission. However, British forces were not been involved in any of the direct military action.

The attack was the most serious confrontation between the US and Iraq since the end of Operation Desert Fox - a four-day aerial bombardment by British and US forces earlier this month aimed at wrecking Iraq's weapons production program after Baghdad was accused of not cooperating with UN arms inspectors.

Iraq, which warned the US and Britain on Sunday that it would fire at planes flying over its territory, said four Iraqis were killed when the US jets fired missiles at its air defense positions.

An Iraqi military spokesman, quoted by the official Iraqi News Agency, said its air defenses had probably shot down a Western military aircraft and that a search was under way for the wreckage of the plane and its pilot.

The US dismissed the claim. National Security Council spokesman David Leavy said: "It's

totally not true. All our air crew returned safely to bases. This is just more propaganda from [Iraqi President] Saddam Hussein."

Clinton said the US attack on the Iraqi missile battery was appropriate and that the US would continue to enforce no-fly zones in the north and south of the country.

"Our pilots have the authority to protect themselves if they are attacked," he said. "They took appropriate action today in responding to Iraq's actions. We will continue to enforce the no-fly zones."

Iraq's UN envoy scoffed at US comments that its pilots acted in self-defense.

"They [the US] said they acted in their own defense as if Florida was attacked," Ambassador Nizar Hamdoun said. "Iraq has always said that there is no way that it could recognize the no-fly zones. They are illegal and they have not been established by United Nations resolutions."

The planes, based in Incirlik in Turkey, were enforcing the no-fly zone above the 36th parallel, established since the end of the 1991 Gulf War to protect Kurds from any attack by forces loyal to Saddam.

Millennium bug to cost banks at least \$100m.

By DAN GERSTENFELD

The cost of preparing for the problems arising from the millennium bug will cost local banks some \$100 million, Israel Discount Bank executive vice president Menahem Guterman said yesterday.

Analysts said, however, that the banks will need to spend much more on solving the problem. Meta Group CEO Jimmy Schwarzkopf said he estimates that the banks will have to spend \$150m-\$200m.

Figures published by the five largest banks suggest that there are big differences in the amount each intends to dedicate to the problem.

While Bank Leumi intends to invest \$58m. over three years, the First International Bank of Israel said its costs would be limited to NIS 12m.

See story, Page 12

IDF officer: Female pilots are 'unnatural'

By LIAT COLLINS

It will take a while for the system to be able to absorb more female pilots, Brig-Gen. Gil Regev, the Manpower branch officer responsible for placement in the IAF, told a meeting of the Knesset Committee on the Status of Women yesterday.

Among the reasons he gave is that every woman takes the place of a man; women don't have the stamina to stick it out as pilots; it interferes with child-rearing; and "it is not natural."

"I'm concerned about the survival rate of the female soldiers in view of the burnout and effort and in view of the fact that even 20 percent of the male soldiers don't last through the pilot's course," he said.

Yael Rom, a former pilot, was just one of many at the meeting who took exception to the portrayal of women as good enough and strong enough only for child-bearing.

MK Naomi Chazan (Meretz) noted that all the same reasons were once given to explain why women were unable to be doctors,

professors, or politicians.

"It is difficult to get the impression that the IAF is really doing everything to encourage women to become pilots," she said.

The IAF was forced by a High Court ruling to accept women into the pilots' course in a test project.

Regev came to the Knesset armed with figures, if not with a sense of the politically correct.

One woman is finishing the pilots' course as a combat navigator this week, he noted.

She is the only one to make it out of the 843 women who requested to be accepted to the pilots course; 134 of whom reached the preliminary basic

training stage; and 58 of whom reached later stages.

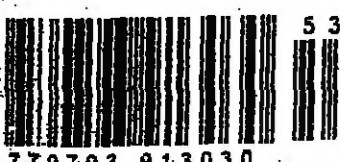
"There is true excitement in the air force that a woman navigator is finishing the course. Phantom squadrons wanted her. She will be placed in a two-seater F-16 squadron," Regev said.

But earlier, he noted, "It was not natural for the boys on the course to see girls on it. When the first girl joined them in preliminary basic training, they were in shock."

Regev told journalists he understood the reaction.

"I also think it's not natural for there to be female pilots. And it's a fact that there hasn't been one for many years."

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NEWS

in brief

Suspected thief caught 3 times in 3 days

A man caught breaking into a business in Haifa early Saturday morning was subsequently arrested twice more for stealing from shops in the same area after twice being released on bail.

Police said the suspect was released on Sunday morning and an hour later was caught stealing a coat from a shop. He was rearrested, detained overnight, and again released on bail, despite a police request that he be remanded.

Haifa police spokesman Supt. Moshe Nissan said 30 minutes later the suspect was spotted stealing five shirts from another shop. "He will be brought before the courts again today and we will see what happens," he said. *David Rudge*

Second rape claim against Haifa U. student

Another female student alleged she was raped in August by a 20-year-old Haifa University student from Upper Nazareth who allegedly raped her friend on Saturday night.

She told police the event took place on campus, where she and the suspect both lived. She entered the suspect's room where two of his friends were present and drank some alcoholic beverages. When the friends left, the suspect raped her. *Itim*

Israel lodges 'serious complaint' with PA

The Foreign Ministry lodged a "serious complaint" with the Palestinian Authority yesterday after Israeli security teams were barred from checking an Egyptian plane - carrying Palestinian Authority Chairman Yasser Arafat - which landed at Gaza International Airport Sunday.

According to the agreement worked out between the Palestinians and the Israelis, Israel has the right to check any plane landing or taking off - except for Arafat's personal plane.

In the complaint the ministry said that Israeli security teams are not allowed to check, in full, all airplanes. *Danna Harman*

Terrorist gets life for Beit Lid attack

Islamic Jihad member Halim Sakav Omar Belbisi, 30, from Gaza, was sentenced to life imprisonment by the Lod Military court yesterday for assisting and transporting terrorists involved in the double suicide bombing at the Beit Lid junction. Twenty-one soldiers and one civilian were killed in the January 22, 1995, attack, and 69 were injured.

Belbisi was recruited into the ranks of the Islamic Jihad in 1994. Aiman Razayana asked him to assist in transporting two suicide bombers inside Israel. Belbisi helped him pick the location of the attack, stored the explosives, provided the bombers with IDF uniforms, and transported the bombers to the site. *Margot Dudkevitch*

Addiction expert likens nicotine to hard drugs

Tobacco and nicotine should be recognized as "addictive substances like heroin, cocaine and marijuana," the head of the Health Ministry's department on addictive behaviors wrote in an opinion presented to the High Court of Justice yesterday. *Judy Siegel*

We mourn the passing of our dear mother

CELIA H. DRAZIN

The funeral will take place today, Tuesday, December 29, 1998, 10th of Tevet, at 10 a.m., at Sanhedria Cemetery, Jerusalem.

Shiva will be at her home, 18 Rehov Harav Berlin, Jerusalem.

Israel and Dina Drazin
Joseph and Shirley Drazin
Sura and Robert Ungar
and families.

We mourn the passing of

HAROLD (Aharon) WINNETT

Children Jack, Leslie, Ruth, and David
Grandchildren and Great-grandchildren.

Shiva at 19 Rehov Hagefen, Hashmonaim,
until Sunday morning, January 3, 1999

Phone: (08) 976-1922

We mourn the passing of

LASZLO SCHWARTZ

dear brother of: Edith Zukor, Montreal
Ervin Schwartz, Los Angeles
Emery Schwartz, Los Angeles

beloved cousin, uncle, great-uncle and great-great-uncle

Funeral will take place on Tuesday, December 29
at 4.30 p.m. at the Har Hamenuchot cemetery,
Shiva in Ra'anana. Call 09-748-8924 for details.

Our beloved wife, mother, grandmother and sister

BELLA SCHOFFMAN WERBLOWSKY

has passed away

Israel Werblowsky Louis and Shirley Schoffman
Joshua and Joan Werblowsky Miriam Weissman
Velvel and Naomi Werblowsky Betty and Martin Levin
Susan and Perry Shulman Yael and Shaul Wiesner
grandchildren, great-grandchildren and families

Coffin due at Ben Gurion airport on Tuesday, December 29 (10 Tevet)
on EL AL LY18 at 12:50 p.m. Burial will take place approximately
1 1/2 hours later at Eretz Hahaim cemetery, Bet Shemesh.
Shiva at the home of Louis Schoffman, 12 Jabotinsky St., Jerusalem,
(Tel: 02-563-0852) and Betty Levin, 48 Noyot St., Jerusalem.

With deep sorrow we announce the passing of

Mrs. SHARLOTA (Zutka) ARNAN

wife of the late NATHAN ARNAN

The funeral will take place today, Tuesday, December 29, 1998, 10th of Tevet 5859,
at 3:30 p.m., at the Kfar Shmaryahu Cemetery.

The Family.

Peres denies deal with Barak

By MICHAEL YUDELINMAN
and NINA GILBERT

MK Shimon Peres yesterday denied reaching any deal with Labor Party leader Ehud Barak to be appointed as Barak's number two, and as a senior minister, in exchange for Peres's support in the elections.

"I don't need any agreement. I'm a party MK," Peres told *The Jerusalem Post*, implying any position he may get derives from his status in the party.

Barak, speaking at a Labor faction meeting at the Knesset, also denied the party was formulating any deals for its Knesset list. He was referring to a report in yesterday's *Ha'aretz* that Peres would be given the number two slot in exchange for an endorsement of Barak and not leaving the party.

"We are not dealing, and we will not deal, with deals," Barak said, noting that the public supporting the party expects it to be united.

However, sources close to Peres and Barak said yesterday the relations between them have been improving steadily, and the two have been meeting regularly for quite some time and working in coordination.

There may be no negotiations or deal between them, but there is a definite rapprochement, the sources said.

They noted Barak consulted Peres before his meeting with US President Bill Clinton, and Peres and Barak had a private dinner with Barak's three American spin doctors on their recent visit.

"It is no news, and was published last week already, that Barak said Peres would be a



MKs agree on a recommended date for elections yesterday in the Knesset. Around the table (from left) are Reuven Rivlin (Likud), Ra'anan Cohen (Labor), Meir Sheerit (Likud), Eli Goldschmidt (Labor), and Haim Oron (Meretz).

senior minister if he becomes prime minister, and Barak confirmed that on Channel 1 on Saturday," a source close to Barak said.

The number two consideration, which is a title rather than a position, derives from the deep appreciation Barak has for Peres, the source said.

The recent announcement of Uri Savir, the director of Peres's Peace Center, that Savir is joining former Chief of General Staff Amnon Lipkin-Shahak's party,

has clouded somewhat the relations between Peres and Barak.

Labor MKs began asking whether Savir's move was with Peres's knowledge and blessing, and whether this indicated Peres too might support Lipkin-Shahak.

Peres stated in response that he supports Barak and is remaining in Labor.

Savir was brought to Lipkin-Shahak's camp by Shimon Sheves, who was director-general of the prime minister's office in the late Yitzhak Rabin's term.

Sheves is Lipkin-Shahak's campaign manager.

In another development, the telephone and fax lines of Barak's Tel Aviv offices collapsed Sunday night under a barrage of calls and letters from people complimenting Barak for his performance during the Likud's central committee meeting.

"We had to stay up until before dawn to answer all the calls," one source close to Barak said.

At the faction meeting yesterday, Barak described the Likud's

central committee as "the end of term party of a government which has fallen already."

"Netanyahu is not capable of bringing peace, not with the Palestinians, and not with the Syrians," he added.

Peres said "it was a scandal that Channels 1 and 2 dedicated two hours to 'Bibi's' elections propaganda." He said "Bibi is exploiting these broadcasts while using tactics known in totalitarian countries, representing himself as a patriot and us traitors."

RACE

Continued from Page 1

The two, who both intend to form centrist parties, described the meeting as "good" and said they would make decisions only after the Knesset sets a date for the elections.

Meanwhile, Defense Minister Yitzhak Mordechai and Communications Minister Limor Livnat are still undecided about quitting the party. Livnat, Mordechai, and Science Minister Silvan Shalom met twice yesterday to discuss their plans, but gave no details afterward.

Mordechai said he will not be pressured into a hasty decision and will take his time before making his move.

"At this time I bear a double responsibility, both as defense minister and as a person weighing his future. I'm thinking and consulting," he said.

Liat Collins adds: Land of Israel Front head Michael Kleiner said he would support Begin in his race for prime minister and criticized National Religious Party leader Yitzhak Levy for describing a vote for Begin as a "vote for the opposition," as it would split the Right.

But National Religious Party MK Hanan Porat praised Begin's decision and called on his party colleagues to unite behind him.

Dana Harman contributed to this report.

GOLAN

Continued from Page 1

Neeman said earlier this week that the word "withdrawal" does not appear in his notes. "The intention of the fabricators is to create an impression that there is no difference on political issues between the Likud and Labor, but the truth is completely different," Netanyahu said, adding that Israel's presence on the Golan Heights is essential for the security of the state and that his opinion on this, which he made clear to Barak, has not changed.

The bill has been proposed in various forms over the past five years, including requiring the support of 80 MKs for such concessions, but none were ever passed.

In a separate development, in a meeting yesterday with three young men from Kiryat Shmona, Netanyahu vowed to protect the northern settlements.

"The world has become accustomed to Israel being hit by missiles, but we have gotten to the stage where we need to change this understanding of the situation among our neighbors," he said.

PROSPECTUS PIA - PRIME MUTUAL FUND

Fund Manager Leumi-PIA Trust Management Company Ltd. (Member of the Bank Leumi le-Israel Group of Companies)

Open Fund

According to section 31(b) (2) of the Joint Investment Trusts Law, 5754-1994, (hereinafter: "the Law") notice is hereby given that a prospectus has been published as follows.

Offering of Units to Foreign Residents Only

An unlimited number of registered Fund units of a nominal value of one U.S. dollar (hereinafter - "dollar") are offered to foreign residents only* at the unit price plus an increment of 1% or less, as detailed in Chapter A of this Prospectus.

The said units are being offered commencing 29 December 1998 until 28 December 1999, and will, subject as provided in paragraphs 4 and 5 of Chapter A of the Prospectus be sold on those days when trading takes place in Israel and abroad as defined in paragraph 1(a) of Chapter A of the Prospectus.

Payment for the units shall be made only in dollars, out of a non-resident foreign currency deposit account (PAIACH) of a foreign resident.

The Fund's Investment Policy and Transactions for the Fund (see Chapter F of the Prospectus)

1. The Fund Agreement provides that:

(a) At least 30% of the net value of the Fund assets will be all or any of the assets set out below: bonds and loans of any class. Notwithstanding this, an investment at a lower rate than that mentioned for a period not exceeding two trading days will not be considered a deviation from such rule.

(b) The provisions of subclause (a) of this clause may be varied by amending the Fund Agreement without requiring the sanction of the unit holders in general meeting.

(c) Subject as provided above, to the provision contained in paragraph 2(b) of Chapter F of the Prospectus and the provisions of any law, the Fund Manager may invest the Fund's resources at his absolute discretion and is also empowered to fix the cash amount to be included in the Fund's assets from time to time.

2. Unless otherwise resolved by the Board of Directors of the Fund Manager, at least 50% of the net value of the Fund assets will be all or any of the assets set out below: bonds and loans of any class. Notwithstanding this, an investment at a lower rate than that mentioned for a period not exceeding two trading days will not be considered a deviation from such rule.

3. Pursuant to the provisions of law, the Fund Manager may purchase for the Fund foreign securities and options traded abroad (in the Prospectus called: "foreign options") at a rate not exceeding 75% of the net value of the Fund assets, provided the investment in options will not exceed the rate mentioned in paragraph 4 hereof, (see also paragraph 2(a) of Chapter F of the Prospectus).

4. Pursuant to the provisions of law, the value of options held by the Fund, apart from Maof (CALL 1 Options) options, is not to exceed 10% of the net value of the Fund assets, and the value thereof, together with the value of option warrants held in the Fund shall not exceed 20% of the net value of the Fund assets (see also paragraph 2(b) of Chapter F of the Prospectus). Details concerning the nature of the options and risks involved in investing and writing options are set out in paragraph 1(c) of Chapter F of the Prospectus.

5. The Fund Manager may carry out the following transactions, subject to the provisions of the Law:

(a) Purchase, sale and writing of options and futures contracts.

(b) Effecting a sale short.

(c) Lending or signing a lending agreement of securities, for the purpose of a sale transaction effected short provided this is not for any other fund being managed by it.

Transactions and Commitments for the Fund

The Fund Agreement provides that the Trust Manager may, without the sanction of a meeting of unit holders, effect any transaction and undertake any commitment for the Fund (apart from increasing the Fund Manager's and Trustee's remuneration) which are not prohibited by the Fund Agreement, provided that such act may be effected and commitment undertaken by law, as the case may be, without the approval of such a meeting.

The Fund's Major Investments in the year ended 30.9.1998

The average major investments of the Fund (according to holdings at the end of each month) in the year ended 30.9.98 was as follows:

	as a % of net value of Fund's assets	
Foreign bonds	71	
Cash in foreign currency	25	
Data concerning the yield of the Fund's Units in correlation to the changes in various indices:		
	Rate of Change in year ending	
	30.9.98	30.9.97
	In %	In %
Yield of Fund's units calculated as based on redemption prices, as published in Stock Exchange's list, in Dollar terms	4.8	6.6
Consumer Price Index (as per the index relating to the last month of each period)	4.7	8.7
Representative rate of exchange of the \$	10.0	8.6

Taxation

With respect to the need to amend the Income Tax Order regarding the tax exemption on the Fund's income from interest on deposits in foreign currency and the intention of the Income Tax Commission to propose the amendment of that Order to the Minister of Finance and the Finance Committee of the Knesset in a manner whereby the above tax exemption will remain unaffected after 31 December, 1998, see the footnote* to paragraph 4(c) in chapter O of this Prospectus.

Cumulative Fund (See Chapter N of the Prospectus)

Unless otherwise decided by the board of directors of the Fund Manager, the Fund will be cumulative and accordingly the Fund Manager will not be entitled to make payments to the unit holders.

"Unrestricted Fund"

The Fund is an "unrestricted fund". Details of the tax provisions applicable to an unrestricted fund are set out in paragraph 6 of Chapter O of the Prospectus, under the heading "Taxation".

Annual Fees of Fund Manager and Trustee (see Chapter J of this Prospectus)

Under the Fund Agreement, the Fund Manager is entitled to receive an annual fee equivalent to 4% of the average annual value of the Fund's assets as calculated for the purpose of fixing the unit price, but unless otherwise decided by the Fund Manager, the Fund Manager received an annual fee equal to 0.9% of the aforementioned value. The Trustee is entitled, under the Fund Agreement, to receive an annual fee equal to 0.2% of the aforementioned value, but unless otherwise decided, the Trustee receives an annual fee equal to 0.1% of the aforementioned value.

Expressions used in the Prospectus

Expressions used in the Law and in the regulations made thereunder, will bear the same meanings when used in this Prospectus, save where the context otherwise requires.

English Translation

The Hebrew version of the Fund Agreement, certificates of participation in the Fund and of the Prospectus are the exclusively binding text. The translator of the Prospectus has certified that the English translation of the Prospectus is a faithful translation of the Hebrew original (the certificate appears as Appendix H of the Prospectus).

Submission of Applications

Applications for the purchase of the units offered are to be lodged with Bank Leumi le-Israel B.M. and the other members of the Tel Aviv Stock Exchange (hereinafter: "TASE") and will be forwarded to the Fund Manager, through the TASE clearing house. A member of the TASE will also be responsible (towards and obliged to pay the Fund Manager, through the TASE clearing house, the full amount of the price due in respect of units sold pursuant to orders lodged by it.

A copy of the Prospectus and of the Securities Authority's permit for the publication thereof will be filed with the Registrar of Companies and the TASE no later than the first business day following the Prospectus date.

Copies of the Prospectus may be obtained at all branches of Bank Leumi le-Israel B.M. and from the other members of the TASE.

Date of Prospectus: 10 Tevet, 5759

29 December 1998.

The Trustee: Kesselman & Kesselman Trust Co. (1971) Ltd.

* In this Prospectus, "Foreign Resident" is as defined in the Currency Control Law 5738 - 1978, and in the Currency Control (Definition of a Foreign Resident) Regulations, 5758-1998, as set out in Appendix E hereof.

LEUMI PIA

How do you sell Begin to the public?

By LIAT COLLINS

He is polite, quiet, and so decent he verges on the nerdish. He does not have a cellular phone, and his office staff consists of an answering machine, a computer, and an electronic notebook he takes with him everywhere.

He travels by bus and often arrives at the Knesset on foot, carrying a bag with his swimming gear after a dip in the Hebrew University pool. He works hard and is never seen in the MKs canteen, where the other politicians dine with each other and the press.

But he is fired by ideology and wants to be prime minister. In that he is like his father, Menachem Begin, minus some of the charisma.

MK Ze'ev (Benny) Begin, 55, is the least prince-like of the Likud heirs. Many note that he is a reluctant politician and would have preferred to remain a geologist.

But several years after his father stepped down as prime minister in

camera, speaking in sound bites, and taking his wife and children along everywhere.

Begin shies away from cameras: rarely issues a press release; prefers rhetoric to one-liners; and most people would not recognize his wife Ruth or any of their six children unless introduced.

And while Netanyahu has US adviser Arthur Finkelstein giving suggestions and Ehud Barak has James Carville et al, Begin seems set to do it alone and his way.

And this might be the best thing he can do, says political media adviser Moti Morel. Media-wise, Begin need change nothing.

"He should just be himself. That's how he is most convincing. When he speaks out, he speaks out the truth as he sees it and this comes across as credible and persuasive. Also, he has some good turns of phrase in his speeches," Morel says.

Morel adds that Begin need not try to exploit the press in the same

Peres, Shamir, Arens:

Dump direct election of PM now

By MICHAEL YUDELMAN

Former prime ministers Shimon Peres and Yitzhak Shamir yesterday joined former defense minister Moshe Arens, who heads the Association for Parliamentary Democracy, in calling for abolishing the direct election of the prime minister in the coming elections.

A bill to abolish the direct election law, presented by MKs Yossi Beilin (Labor) and Uzi Landau (Likud), passed its first reading in the Knesset last week by a majority of 62 MKs, but is applicable only as of the 16th Knesset.

Shamir and Peres warned of the growing fragmentation of the large parties and the increase of splinter parties, which already has created a situation in which the prime minister cannot function. This will get worse in the next Knesset, they said.

"There is a real danger that the state will lose its power to make decisions. There will be no one representing the state or the national interests, but only the sectarian interests of the various splinter parties. Whoever is elected prime minister, the coalition will chain his arms and legs, and instead of a central idea or central responsibility, there will be a collection of pressure groups," Peres said.

He conceded the previous system had weaknesses, "but parties could unite behind a vital economic decision of national interest. In the present situation this is impossible."

Arens said the situation is rapidly heading towards "political anarchy. We must make a last minute effort to pass the law in second and third reading so that it's applied in the next elections. A Knesset consisting of



Former prime ministers Shimon Peres (left) and Yitzhak Shamir (right) and former defense minister Moshe Arens explain their opposition to the direct election law at a press conference in Tel Aviv's Beit Sokolov yesterday. (Yael Somach/Tamir Sun)

sectarian parties is bad for the state. It pushes aside the national agenda. We hope the chaos which has broken loose in the past week will help convince more MKs to support the bill."

"The power of the major parties is decreasing, while the power and number of the smaller ones is rising. The public and national interest requires large parties dedicated to the general interest, rather than the sectarian ones," Shamir said.

Professor Arik Cammon, director of the Israeli Democracy Institute, said the events of the past week demonstrate more than anything else the terrible plight of Israeli democracy.

"We've seen phenomena unmatched in any democracy in the world. For the first time in history the ruling party has less than 50% in the cabinet and this will get worse. The ruling party will not have enough Knesset mandates to support the prime minister and cabinet decisions. Today there are eight parties in the coalition, and if the situation continues there will be more," he said.



Ze'ev (Benny) Begin (left) need not play up the fact that he is the son of Menachem Begin; everyone knows who he is. (Israel Sun/Zoom 77)



1983, he ran for the Knesset and won a seat in 1988. He was appointed science minister by Binyamin Netanyahu in 1996.

Just hours before being sworn in, Begin threatened to turn down his chance of being a minister when he learned his close friend Dan Meridor might not be joining the cabinet. It was one of his typical stands on doing the right thing. And he later left the job, and its perks, over a matter of principle: He disagreed with the Hebron agreement.

Now instead of remaining a backbench Likud MK, Begin has announced he will leave the party altogether and run against Netanyahu in the race for prime minister.

Image-wise it is hard to imagine a person more different. Netanyahu has taken the use of media to new heights, timing events to coincide precisely with prime-time news broadcasts, making sure to get the best out of a

way that Netanyahu and Barak do. He doesn't need it. Begin's right-wing supporters distrust the media and have alternative channels of information, including word of mouth.

"There is a tendency to exaggerate the power of the press, but it tends to have more influence among the Left than among the Right," Morel says.

Begin also need not play up the "son-of" side. Everyone knows who he is and where he is coming from.

Another advantage Begin has over his competitors is that his stand is very clear. Netanyahu, Barak, and centrist candidates will have to deal with persuading people on difficult issues, such as the need for territorial concessions under certain conditions. Begin doesn't.

"And he doesn't have the problem about making electoral promises that he knows he can't keep," says Morel. "Because he knows he's not going to be prime minister in the end."

Settlers split on Begin's candidacy

By MARGOT DUDKEVITCH

MK Ze'ev (Benny) Begin's intention to run for prime minister stirred debate within the Council of Jewish Communities in Judea, Samaria, and Gaza yesterday.

The council plans to meet tomorrow to try to reach a unified decision to support one candidate to lead the national camp.

Council members hope to meet with Begin today in an attempt to persuade him his move is a mistake that will create a split the Right and allow the Left to rise to power, as in 1992.

National Religious Party leader Yitzhak Levy called Begin's announcement "a tragic political split, that will only help [Labor Party leader Ehud] Barak. Every vote for Begin is a loss for the right-wing."

Council chairman Pinhas Wallerstein declared that while he does not oppose the establishment of new parties, fielding another prime ministerial candidate is a waste. He said now is the time to unify the national camp and work together.

If Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu intends to implement the Wye agreement, he said, settler leaders will not support him, but one should also realize that a victory for Labor Party or the new centrist party will lead to the uprooting of settlements.

Within the council, many members oppose Netanyahu, but feel the alternatives will be far worse for the national camp and settlers.

Moshe Leshem, head of Gambia Shall Not Fall Again, disagreed with Wallerstein and declared that apart from Begin, there is no right-wing today.

Speaking on Arutz 7, he said Netanyahu's approach to the Land of Israel is the same as Barak's, and whoever is afraid of Barak should be more afraid of Netanyahu.

Netanyahu, he said, did not build in the settlements because he told the US that he would allow "natural growth" only. "He built much less than [Yitzhak] Rabin and [Shimon] Peres," he said.

He added that Begin stands for principled leadership, something for which the public wants.

ANALYSIS

Continued from Page 1

Ideologically, it would be more convenient for her if he runs for prime minister and does not link his fate to Shahak. But on its own, a Meridor list might not even manage to cross the Knesset threshold.

This would leave Livnat out in the cold. If she followed Meridor into a Shahak-led party, her credibility would be shot because Shahak is not even remotely close to her ideologically. This would be a match hard to explain away.

Moreover, a Shahak-Meridor combination would attract many political malcontents and refugees from Left and Right. She might even find herself on the same ticket with former Labor secretary-general Nissim Zivili, an unabashed leftist.

But worse than the embarrassment factor, so many bandwagon-climbers are sure to push her quite low on the party list. Even the party's creator, Ronni Milo, might suffer such humiliation.

In short, Livnat might not do herself a favor by leaving the Likud. She will stay put unless she has concluded that there is no way Netanyahu could possibly win the elections. Rather than follow him into the opposition, she may cast her lot elsewhere. It could also be that her dislike of Netanyahu has overshadowed all else.

Ideologically, she is closer to him than to Meridor or Shahak. Her quarrel with Netanyahu is nothing but personal. Her payoff might be the knowledge that her departure from Netanyahu's side could hurt him more than anyone else's walkout.

Meridor and Begin were write-offs for nearly two years. Even Defense Minister Yitzhak Mordechai could come up with a clumsy ideological pretext for parting ways with Netanyahu.

But in her case, it would be the hardest slap in Netanyahu's face, all the more smacking because the opposition will take a very personal, rather than issue-driven, tack against Netanyahu. Livnat would be handing it an arsenal.

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Religious councils bill passes 1st read

Proposed law would keep non-Orthodox off councils

By NINA GILBERT

Giving in to a coalition demand from the religious parties, the government put the economic arrangements bill to a vote yesterday only after the House passed the first reading of an amendment to the Religious Services Law that would block Reform and Conservative Jews from serving on religious councils.

The 51-46 vote on the religious councils bill was marked by some defections from members of the coalition. Voting against the bill were The Third Way's Alex Lubotzky, Yisrael Ba'aliya's Roman Bronfman, Michael Nudelman, and Marina Solodkin and Tsomet's Eliezer Zandberg.

However, Tsomet leader Rafael Eitan voted for the bill.

Industry and Trade Minister Natan Sharansky abstained himself from the vote, as did the Democratic Arab Party MKs.

United Torah Judaism had made its support of the economic bill contingent on the passage of the councils bill, which would require council rabbis to sign an oath of allegiance to the rulings of the Chief Rabbinate.

The government initiated the legislation after the High Court of Justice ruled that blocking non-Orthodox rabbis from councils

was illegal.

After the results of the vote were announced by Knesset Speaker Dan Tichon, Meretz leader Yossi Sarid jumped from his seat and called out: "Israel's Knesset is passing an antisemitic law," causing a raucous in the House.

"The legislation is antisemitic since it is meant to keep out Jews only because they are Reform and Conservative," Sarid said afterwards.

MK Taleb a-Sanaa (Democratic Arab Party) explained the party's decision to abstain from the vote by saying that it did not feel it was fitting for the party to cast a deciding vote on a Jewish religious dispute.

At the same time, he acknowledged that the vote was determined by political considerations, and the party had thus considered voting against it.

MK Amnon Rubinstein (Meretz) said the legislation hurts unity among the Jewish people, plants seeds of hatred, and causes a rift with large Jewish communities in the Diaspora.

Last week Meretz turned the vote on the councils bill into a no-confidence motion, resulting in a one-week postponement of the vote.

However, Meretz withdrew its no-confidence motion yesterday

due to the ongoing talks between the opposition and coalition on setting a date for early general elections in the spring.

Hemdat, the Council for Freedom of Science, Religion and Culture in Israel, said the vote "is a low point in relations between the Diaspora and the State of Israel." The group said it sees great danger in the manner in which High Court rulings are being bypassed via legislation, an approach that "is liable to undermine the foundations of democracy."

Haim Shapiro adds:

Following the vote, Rabbi Uri Regev, director of the Reform Movement's Israel Religious Action Center, said that in addition to flouting the High Court, the bill created a special category of declaration, not to the laws of the state, but to the Chief Rabbinate.

Rabbi Ehud Bandel, president of the Conservative movement in Israel and one of the two non-Orthodox representatives named to the Jerusalem Religious Council, said he could not swear a false oath.

He said he would be willing to accept the halachic authority of the chief rabbis in areas where the law defines them as having authority, such as marriage and divorce, but not in other matters.



Hussam Abu Yakoub holds his two children as he and his wife watch their home in Kafr Haris being demolished yesterday. (AP)

Civil Administration demolishes two Palestinian homes

By BEN LYNNFIELD

The IDF's eviction of a Palestinian family from an illegally built West Bank home slated for demolition turned into a violent confrontation yesterday as dozens of neighbors pelted soldiers with stones and troops responded with tear gas and rubber-coated bullets.

A soldier and a border policeman were lightly wounded during the incident in Kafr Haris, across the road from Ariel in the northern West Bank.

AP reported from the scene that the owner of the house, Hussam Abu Yakoub, was wrestled to the ground by IDF troops while he clutched his toddler son and tried to block them. Blood was seen running down his temple, AP said.

AP said troops fired tear-gas into the house to force the residents out.

Another house in the village also was

destroyed, according to Peter Lerner, spokesman for the Civil Administration. Its owner was identified by the Palestinian Authority's Voice of Palestine radio station as Awdeh Abdel-Kader.

"These were two illegally built houses, we had gone through all the legal procedures and they were demolished," Lerner said.

A border policeman and an IDF soldier were lightly wounded during the incident in Kafr Haris, across the road from Ariel in the northern West Bank.

The IDF Spokesman said the stone-throwing took place "during rioting by Palestinians in the course of the Civil Administration's demolition of illegal structures. The soldier and policeman received medical treatment on the spot. The

IDF force responded with rubber bullets and tear gas and the rioting was dispersed." Kamil Afghani, a Palestinian legislator from the Nablus district, said the demolitions would fuel anger and resentment among Palestinians.

"Daily life is getting worse and worse with each passing day," he said.

The most recent destruction of Palestinian structures took place last week, when Beduin tents were confiscated near the Hamra settlement in the Jordan Valley.

"We carry out law enforcement all the time," Lerner said.

Yesterday's demolitions brought the total number of houses in the West Bank destroyed by the Civil Administration this year to 150, according to figures from Noga Kidman, a staffer at Beuselem - the Israel Center for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories. The Civil Administration said it was checking its tally.

Poraz: Mamilla delay due to Shabbat

By AMY KLEIN and news agencies

MK Avraham Poraz (Shinui) yesterday appealed to the Supreme Court for the dismissal of the directors of the public-owned Carta Company, saying that they are holding up completion of Jerusalem's Mamilla project because they don't want movie theaters to be open on Shabbat there.

The NIS 500 million Mamilla project outside the Old City was recently halted because of a dispute between the developer, Alrov Ltd., and Carta, the company for the development of central Jerusalem, which owns the project. Carta chairman Shmuel Casper

called Poraz's appeal a scandal, and said they refused to sign building permit applications because they contradict the original zoning plans. The issue has nothing to do with movie theaters, Casper said yesterday.

According to Casper, Alrov wants to build on some 2,000 sq. meters which have been designated for public property.

But Danny Golan, Alrov's project manager for Mamilla, claims that Alrov has the right to build on this property, and "this is not the issue. Carta has acted improperly, using non-business considerations."

Both companies have entered binding arbitration.

In his appeal, Poraz requested that Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, as the Minister of Finance and the Minister of Building and Planning, fire the five board members because they allowed their personal considerations, rather than business ones, to determine Carta's position.

The government owns 74% of Carta, and the Jerusalem municipality owns 26%.

"The state has invested hundreds of millions of shekels in the Mamilla project, evacuated hundreds of residents and businesses from there, and now this massive project will be stopped because of an illegal decision which is religiously-motivated," Poraz wrote.

Unexploded Katyusha extracted from moshav in North

By DAVID RUDGE

An unexploded Katyusha rocket was safely removed from the garden of the home of Meir Shpan and his wife Leah on Moshav Liman, 5 km. north of Nahariya, yesterday evening.

"It was only on Friday that I discovered we had an unwelcome and uninformed guest embedded in the ground in the backyard of our house," said Meir Shpan. "I had gone outside to pick up the newspaper, which the paper boy usually throws onto the path, but this time it fell nearer the garden, and I happened to notice a hole that shouldn't have been there."

"I asked Leah if somebody had been digging in the backyard and when she said no, I told her I thought that the hole had been caused by a Katyusha, and that it was still there."

The moshav was one of the places in the Galilee hit in Hizbullah's Katyusha barrage last Wednesday. A number of rockets struck the moshav, causing considerable damage, but no casualties.

The discovery of the Katyusha caused a security alert which lasted until it was neutralized and safely removed.

"We were told that as long as it was embedded in the ground, there was no

danger, but when the IDF's bomb disposal squad and police sappers started work on Sunday to remove it, Leah and I were evacuated, as were our neighbors, as a precaution," said Shpan. "We had guests at the motel that we run nearby, who also had to be evacuated because of the possibility of the rocket exploding while it was being removed."

Police and soldiers guarded the vacated properties throughout Sunday and yesterday, as work continued on trying to remove the 2.5-meter rocket from the 4-meter deep hole.

"They started to dig around the rocket and downward until they reached a depth

of about four meters, but that wasn't enough. They had to bring in heavier equipment and continued digging to a depth of about eight meters until they were in a position to neutralize the rocket and then slowly and very carefully remove it," said Shpan.

The rocket was finally taken to a safe place and destroyed.

Meanwhile, in the security zone, an IDF soldier was lightly wounded in an accidental shooting on Sunday night. Troops were en route to carry out a mission when a rifle discharged and one of the soldiers was shot in the leg. The wounded soldier was taken to

Safed's Rebecca Sieff Hospital. The IDF is investigating.

In a separate incident on Sunday, South Lebanese Army troops on a mission in the Beaufort Castle area found a weapons cache in a deserted house in Arnoun village near the border of the zone.

The munitions store included several explosive devices as well as a heavy machine gun and food supplies.

Military sources said it appeared that gunmen, probably from Hizbullah, were using the abandoned building as a hide-out for launching attacks on IDF and SLA targets in the zone.

Gov't nixes planned cut in investment aid

By DAVID ZEV HARRIS and JESSICA STEINBERG

The government yesterday decided to cancel its plan to further cut capital-investment aid, to 22 percent from its current 24% in high-priority development zones, originally scheduled for implementation in January 1999.

The cabinet agreed to delay debating the measure until next year.

In recent months, Industry and Trade Minister Natan Sharansky waged a campaign against implementing the cut, commenting that it would send a negative signal to the business community.

Former finance ministers Dan Meridor and Yaakov Neeman supported the gradual reduction to 20%, saying the aid wasn't crucial for encouraging industrial development.

"Because of the economic situation and the decline in investments, the government can't act on decisions made two years ago and ignore what's happening today," Sharansky told the cabinet, in reference to the economy's slowdown since 1996.

The cabinet's decision won't have an effect on the 1999 state budget because investors aren't taking advantage of the aid. Investment Center head David Baruch said.

IDF now letting former patients serve

By JUDY SIEGEL

Young people with a history of emotional disturbance who want to join the IDF are - for the first time - being examined on a case-by-case basis, and some of them have been allowed to serve as volunteers.

Among the first 10 accepted during the past year, three have won certificates of excellence for their service.

This was disclosed by Maj. Gadi Lubin of the Medical Corps psychiatric division, who spoke at a Health Ministry symposium on "Rights of the Mentally Disabled Patient."

The day-long event, marking International Mental Health Day, was held at the Shalom Hotel in Jerusalem, and attended by 450 mental-health profes-

sionals, volunteers in support groups, families of the mentally disturbed, and patients themselves.

Lubin said that more than a quarter of the young people with known psychological problems before enlisting were accepted into the army during the past year.

The IDF, he added, has also shown more openness to soldiers who develop emotional crises during their service. Instead of automatically giving them a profile of 21, leading to their discharge, those who want to continue to serve, if judged suitable, are sent to computer, medic, or other courses.

"We are helping to fight the stigma among the emotionally disturbed," said Lubin. "Among the considerations we are look-

ing for when we judge the case are if the would-be volunteer was involved in a violent incident, either against himself or someone else, during the three years before... Others are their current functioning, how they have integrated themselves into society, discipline, and whether - and how much - the person wants to serve."

Lubin added: "[I have] made some errors in my decisions; but we have dealt with hundreds of cases already, and the cost of errors have so far been minimal. In most cases, commanding officers have been very satisfied with the volunteers."

Lubin conceded, however, that, in general, he is "not proud" of the IDF's process of discharging soldiers with mental problems and their subsequent

follow-up. "We have got to improve in this matter," he declared.

Many families of patients, as well as those with a history of mental problems in the audience, attacked the IDF headily with a variety of complaints, including "causing" their sons emotional distress during service, and a "lack of humane treatment" before, during, and after their service.

According to Yisrael Eldar, chairman of the Forum for Families of the Mentally Disabled, 60,000 chronically ill among the emotionally disturbed do not receive vital medications from their health fund, but have to pay most or all of the cost themselves because the drugs are not included in the health basket.

Doctor kills self after found guilty of fraud

By JUDY SIEGEL

A former hospital head killed himself yesterday, a day after he had been convicted of several counts of fraud.

Dr. Gavriel Canaan, 62, former director-general of the Rebecca Sieff Hospital in Safed, shot himself in the head with a licensed pistol at home.

On Sunday, Tiberias Magistrates' Court found him guilty of several counts of issuing false financial reports to the hospital, misusing research funds for trips abroad, and fraud. He had served as his own defense attorney.

In a suicide note, Canaan said he could not bear the fact that he was found guilty, and said he had been treated unfairly. He "never

dreamed that a court would convict him based on cheap gossip," he wrote.

His body was found by his wife Dorit, a psychologist at Sieff. He is also survived by two sons and two daughters.

The Health Ministry had not yet started the process of a professional hearing, as it was waiting for a court ruling about the criminal violations, which occurred in 1990 and 1991.

The ministry said it was "very sorry about the way Dr. Canaan met his death."

It noted that he had received citations for bravery during the Yom Kippur War and had contributed to the advancement of public health in the North. Canaan had been chief of surgery at Poriya Hospital before joining Sieff.

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TRAVEL WITH THE EXPERTS

150 من الراحل

One in five Israeli children is poor

By ARYEH DEAN COHEN

One out of every five of the 2,022,700 children in the nation continues to live in poverty, and "we can no longer speak of 'One Israel' when it comes to them," Asher Ben-Arye of the National Council for the Child told Knesset members yesterday at the annual presentation of the council's study, *Israeli Children 1998*.

"We are taking away their dreams," Dr. Yitzhak Kadman, executive director of the council, said. "The services these children are receiving are being cut back, and by doing so we are giving them practically no chance not only economically, but also as regards education, health services, and culture."

The study also found a significant increase in acts of violence involving and among children, with 1,309 cases involving violence committed by children in educational institutions – almost all against other children – a 41% increase over 1990.

"Combine the economic data with the sad fact that over the past year children have been exposed to violence more than ever before, either as victims, participants or witnesses to violence, and we get a very upsetting picture regarding Israeli children," Kadman said.

According to the study, prepared by Ben-Arye and Yaffa Zonit of the council, 436,000 Israeli children, or 21.8%, are poor, with the poverty level almost double among non-Jews (36.7%) than among Jews (17.9%). This figure is more accurate than the 319,000 presented by the National Insurance Institute,

because the latter did not include homes where the breadwinner is self-employed or towns where the overall population was fewer than 2,000 people, Ben-Arye said.

"Poor children speak with their eyes," said Knesset Speaker Dan Tichon. "You look at them and

their eyes say everything... They've long given up on having things others take for granted like computers, their own desk on which to do their homework, and a dream of their own room. They don't even talk about going abroad."

Tichon called for an investigation of why, despite considerable sums spent for social services, the situation remains so serious.

Almost 171,000 children were living last year in extremely difficult economic circumstances, with their family's entire income based on welfare, an increase of 109% compared to the same figure in 1990.

Immigrant children were particularly hard-hit. Between 1990-97, 216,842 of them arrived here, and between 1995-97, the percentage living under the poverty line rose from 22.6% to 23.5%. The percentage of single-parent families among the immigrants is almost three times that in the overall population (21.2% compared to 8.2%), which also contributes to their difficult situation.

Regarding violence, the study found that 7,222 police files were opened regarding juveniles in 1997, compared to 6,650 in 1996, up 8.6%. Juveniles' involvement in drug-related crimes is increasing, and reached 6% last year.

A total of 6,200 police files involving crimes committed against juveniles – 1,407 involving crimes committed within the family – was reported last year. Last year 1,692 children hurt in domestic violence were hospitalized, an 88% increase over 1995.

Kadman said Israel is neglecting its children because "they have no electoral power," and investment in them only shows results many years later.

"Politicians want to see results right away," he said, but neglecting children often produces immediate negative results. He called on Israelis "to understand that the expense item called 'children' should not be seen as an expense, but an investment... the best that can be made. Maybe the policy will change if we understand that today's children are the citizens and future of Israel tomorrow."

Crumbling health care sends more children to emergency rooms

Almost a quarter of the nation's children spent at least some time in a hospital emergency room last year, according to data released yesterday by the National Council for the Child.

The council's annual report noted that 495,000 children were taken to hospital emergency rooms, in 66.9 percent of the cases for an illness.

"Many of them never should have had to come to an emergency room," said Asher Ben-Arye, who helped prepare the study for the council. "They could have gotten the medical treatment in their community if their health funds weren't collapsing, closing down services, cutting hours and leading to a situation where parents take their children directly to the emergency room."

A total of 163,000 children turn up at hospital emergency rooms annually due to accidents, of which only about 15% are car accidents, the study also reported. Accidents at schools were up 7.4% last year to 14,500.

Not all the data was negative – the decline in the infant mortality rate continued in 1997, to 6.2 per 1,000 live births. However, the rate among non-Jews is still almost twice that among Jews – 9.8 among Moslems, 5 among Jews, 4.5 among Christians and 8.5 among Druze.

Givatayim is the "oldest" city in the country,

with only 20.5% of the population children, while the Beduin town of Rahat in the Negev is the "youngest," with 60.3% of the population children. Betar (56.3%), Efrat (55.2%), Kfar Munda (55.3%), Kiryat Arba (50.8%), Maccabim-Reut (48.1%), Shoham (48.1%), Umm el-Fahm (47.8%), Bnei Brak (47.5%) and Jerusalem (40.5%) were some of the other leading "young" areas. Tel Aviv (21.6%), Ramat Gan (21.5%), Haifa (24.1%) and Bat Yam (24.7) lead the "old" communities.

Immigrant children make up the highest percentage among all children in Or Akiva, Sderot and Upper Nazareth, where they are more than 36% of the children, and in Hadera (28.7%), Karmiel (26.7%), Kiryat Yam (26.8), Arad (24.6), Kiryat Gat (23.4), Ma'alot (22.5) and Kiryat Malachi (21.4).

Ben-Arye also noted that 31,900 children, mainly of immigrants, are classified as having "no religion," a situation which contributes to difficulties in their obtaining vital services.

Divorce is also playing an increasing role in the world of children, with some 10,000 children's parents going through a divorce in 1997, a significant increase over 1996 (7,295), according to the study.

The study also found that there are 87,000 single-parent families here, with some 141,000 children.

Aryeh Dean Cohen

NEWS

in brief

Man crushes grandson to death with tractor

Roni Jamal Salim, 12, of Deir Hanna in Western Galilee, was killed yesterday afternoon after being hit by a tractor driven by his grandfather.

The grandfather was driving the tractor on a path half a kilometer from the village. Attached to the back was a cart with several children inside.

Salim tried to move from the cart to the tractor while it was moving and lost his balance, catching his head between the wheel and the mudguard.

Teen killed in freak accident

A 15-year-old from a Galilee village was killed yesterday when, in a fit of anger, he slammed a pipe containing a bullet against a wall and it went off in his face.

He had asked another youth to call his mother and, when the other youth did not, he banged the 30-cm. pipe, which contained a bullet from a hunting rifle, against a wall.

Police said it is unclear why the teen had a bullet in the pipe.

Teen driver regulations take effect in March

The regulation allowing those over 17 to obtain driver's licenses is to go into effect on March 3.

According to the regulation, young people may begin taking driving lessons at 16 and a half. However, the 17-year-olds who get licenses will have to drive with an older driver for the first six months.

10th of Tevet marked today

The Fast of the 10th of Tevet, which marks the beginning of the siege of Jerusalem by the Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar II, who destroyed the First Temple in 586 BCE, occurs today.

In the early years of the state, the chief rabbis specified this day as the day to remember all those date of death is unknown, including those who perished in the Holocaust.

Many observant Jews continue to consider it the Holocaust Memorial Day.

The fast is observed from sunrise to sunset. According to the Jerusalem Religious Council, the fast begins at 6:34 a.m. and ends at 4:47 p.m.

Ministry helps Greek, Turkish Cypriots

Israelis and Palestinians may have much to learn about resolving conflicts, but that isn't stopping the Foreign Ministry from running conflict resolution courses for Turkish and Greek Cypriots.

"We have a great deal of experience in conflict negotiation and resolution, and think we have something to contribute to others in this regard," said Miki Arbel, director of training at MASHAV, the Foreign Ministry's Center for International Cooperation at the Ministry of Affairs.

Twenty-five participants graduated this week from the experimental, month-long program, which was held at the Negev Institute for Strategic Peace Planning and Development.

Rabbinate warns of unqualified 'mohalim'

By HAIM SHAPIRO

Unqualified *mohalim* (ritual circumcisers) and even doctors can harm children by performing circumcisions which are not according to Halacha, according to Rabbi Avraham Babayof, head of the circumcision department of the Chief Rabbinate.

Babayof made his comments in connection with the distribution of identity tags to some 300 *mohalim* who are authorized by the rabbinate.

In particular, he warned against the use of a local anesthetic before the operation, which he said the Health Ministry had described as an unnecessary medical risk.

Babayof called on those needing the services of a *mohel* to examine the tags, which differentiate between those who are merely certified and those who are categorized as experts. The list of certified *mohalim* has also been distributed to delivery rooms and local religious councils.

However, Rabbi Andrew Sacks, a Conservative rabbi and the only non-Orthodox rabbi to function regularly as a *mohel* here, said that the Chief Rabbinate committee which authorizes *mohalim* has no legal authority to do so. It is made up entirely of haredim and has refused to allow a Conservative rabbi to recite a blessing when a physician performs a circumcision in a hospital, he said.

Sacks added that the medical requirements for *mohalim* is minimal.

There is, he said, no testing for hepatitis or HIV.

"According to them, a physician can perform neurosurgery, but not a circumcision," he said.

Drug use up among young immigrants from CIS, Ethiopia

By ARYEH DEAN COHEN

The education system has "failed dismally" in preventing drug use among young Ethiopian immigrants, Knesset Immigration and Absorption Committee chairman Naomi Blumenthal said yesterday.

Speaking at a session on drug use among new immigrants, Blumenthal said the scope of drug use among both adults and youths in the immigrant population is more severe, "because a large percentage of the addicts and users are not exposed to and are unaware of treatment methods."

MK Yuli Stern (Yisrael Ba'aliya) said the various treatment centers are unaware of the phenomenon and are therefore ill-equipped to deal with it.

"All the bodies dealing with the war against drugs must meet to discuss specific ways of prevention, supplying information and treatment," he said. "The education system must allocate special budgets for activity among the young new immigrants from

Ethiopia and the CIS."

MK Naomi Chazan, who last week was appointed chairman of the Knesset committee on drug abuse, said a study must be made among the immigrants to check the scope of the problem and determine what needs to be done.

Anti-Drug Authority director-general Shlomo Gal said Ethiopian youth comprise eight percent of youth treated at ambulatory drug treatment centers, despite the fact that they make up only 1% of the juvenile population. "The situation among youngsters from the CIS is even more serious; they make up 20% of the youths treated, and they are less than 8% of the population," Gal said, adding the situation will only worsen if special treatment for immigrants is not offered.

The committee called on all the bodies involved in fighting drug use to hold a special session on the matter and called on the Anti-Drug Authority to publicize the frameworks for treatment among immigrants, including in the media in their languages.



Working for JNF

Senior members of the Habonim Dror youth movement from Britain pose at their Jewish National Fund work site above Sha'ar Hagai before the arrival of 150 of their younger counterparts for a week of winter camp. In the front row (from left) are Oli Greenspan, Kathryn Raymond, Sam Leifer, and Evie Bergson; in the back row (from left) are Ben Farleigh, Mickey Marks, Ben Woolf, Rick Berke, Dan Berliowitz, and Aron Kliner.

(Joe Malcolin)

Lake Kinneret at 44 cm. above 'red-line' Water shortage worse than in '91

By DAVID RUDGE

The water level in the Kinneret has continued dropping, despite recent rain in the North, and is now only 44 centimeters from the "red-line" mark.

"The situation is very bad, even worse in my opinion than we had in the winter of 1991 because at least then there was some rainfall in November and December," said Shlomo Bahaloul, deputy head of the Lake Kinneret Authority.

"So far this winter the amount of rainfall around the Kinneret area itself has been marginal – a total of about 15 millimeters at the southern end and less than 50 millimeters at the northern end, which is barely enough to wet the ground," said Bahaloul.

Local showers are expected in most parts of the country today, with the weather bureau warning of the risk of flooding in the South. The rainfall, however, is not expected to be heavy enough to make any impact on the depleted waters of the Kinneret.

"We are still waiting for the winter to start, and hoping and praying that the long-range forecast for more than average rainfall will still prove to be correct," said Bahaloul.

Further north, staff of the Mt. Hermon ski site are also keeping their fingers crossed. A ski site without snow does not have a lot to offer visitors.

"There's a few centimeters of snow on the peak – enough for visitors to throw snowballs at one another, but the middle and lower slopes are brown, just like in the summer," said site manager

Menachem Baruch. Baruch noted that millions of shekels had been invested in improving the site and its facilities, including a video on-line Internet site to show the state of skiing on the slopes.

"Normally, the season opens between January 5-10, so we still have some time to go and there are finally signs that winter is in the air, which is encouraging," said Baruch.

"In normal times, however, we would have seen more rain and

some light snow by now, which has not happened so far this year.

"Nevertheless, we are still hopeful that winter is on the way, despite the fact that no heavy rain, or snow in our case, is forecast for the region in the coming days," he added.

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Choices and prices

In old rural communities, no sane farmer would ever dream of putting the cart before the horse. In our sophisticated world, expert pundits with strings of degrees that stretch as far as plowed furrows do it all the time.

There is a long-standing conventional wisdom that says when China progresses economically, so will it democratically. Inevitably, as dawn follows darkness.

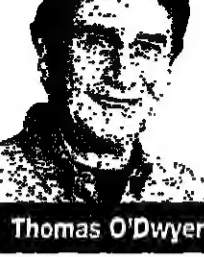
This is patently not so. The truth is that as China has advanced economically, it has stood still democratically.

When it stands still economically, it regresses rapidly to Communist Party tyranny, democratically speaking, as darkness follows twilight.

For all the chaos in Russia, its political leadership has chosen to put the economic cart in the right place — behind the democratic horse. Because of its developing democratic institutions and the freedom of its people to contribute to and vote on national issues, there is good reason to assume that democratic success will eventually deliver the economic goods.

In China, a good economy did not, and will not, deliver democracy.

Column One



Thomas O'Dwyer

Americans had a favorable view of China and 13 percent had an unfavorable view. In July, a month after Tiananmen, the romantic sheen became somewhat tarnished — the poll figures reversed.

President Jiang Zemin cannot be accused of acting duplicitously — promising human rights progress to the Americans on one hand, and jailing dissidents with the other. Just before the recent trials began, he stated clearly what many China apologists have forgotten: China is a monolithic, communist dictatorship that will brook no dissent, so get used to it.

Jiang said China will never accept multi-party politics. It is subversion and will be crushed. The party must be obeyed, the system must not be weakened, and Western types of political system would never ever be copied. These systems represent "infiltration, subversion, and separatism by international and domestic hostile forces."

There you have it — there is no anti-China propaganda there; that is China in its own words. The question is, what can the democratic world do about it?

The answer is, not a lot, but at least the China business lobby can stop trying to fool us all.

Annoying kangaroos

It is more likely that a stalling economy will deliver more repression as the leadership's obsession with "stability" (status quo) becomes paramount. Now that 1999's predicted global recession looms closer, it is no surprise that pro-democracy activists are being rounded up and locked up.

Did somebody forget that this is a communist state run by ruthless hacks who have clawed their way to the top and who intend to remain there until power is prized from their cold dead hands?

So far in the past week China has jailed four pro-democracy activists in its latest sweep of repression.

For trying to register a token China Democracy party, they have been charged, without defense, in trials lasting mere hours, with such crimes as subversion and "providing intelligence to hostile foreign organizations" (human rights groups).

The trials breached the rules of China's own laws. To call them kangaroo courts would be to insult the justice system of Australian marsupials.

Shortly after Mikhail Gorbachev visited Beijing amid huge pro-democracy rallies inspired by his reforms in the Soviet Union, the Chinese made it clear that Moscow's way would not be their way.

As soon as Gorbachev had gone, they proved it, moving the army in to Tiananmen Square to begin the slaughter of the nascent democracy and the young people who advocated it.

I am the law

It was a rude awakening for the starry-eyed China pundits. Thanks to their efforts, US opinion polls in March 1989 showed that 75 percent of

Choices have prices

If China can be honest about being an illiberal dictatorship, the American business lobby can at least be honest about the rapacious greed (sorry, marketing strategy) that allows it to brush aside China's human rights abuses, hatred of democracy, forced prison labor, show trials, or peevish bullying of democratic Taiwan.

Every state is different and is free to adopt the Sinatra doctrine and do it their way, but choices have prices.

At one extreme, Iraq is paying an extreme price for its extreme obnoxiousness. At the other extreme, states like Denmark or New Zealand live in blissful wealth, near anonymity, and unbridled freedom, rewards for a choice of not irritating anybody.

If China wishes to sign UN charters on human rights and freedom (two in the past year) and be a respected member of the modern family of nations — as its great size and culture entitle it to be — it cannot forever run with the communist fox and hunt with the capitalist hounds. There's a price.

The trouble with America's China policy has been that it is three-faced: Washington can never decide whether China is a friend, an enemy, or neither. (Europe's policy is either faceless or egg-on-face.) The US Commerce Department drools over exports to China, the friendly colorful market place. The State Department frets about human rights, democracy, and the cost of its fretting. Coming in a poor third, the Defense Department worries about this potential enemy's relentless modernization and expansion of its military.

No wonder China is confused — it's the message stupid!

By SUE ANNE PRESSLEY

HARDEEVILLE, S.C. — Henry Ingram does not cotton to Yankees. He has, in fact, taken legal steps at the Jasper County Courthouse here to ensure that no Yankee can ever trespass on or purchase his Delta Plantation, a 1,700-acre abandoned rice farm filled with water turkeys, snowy egrets, moss-draped oaks, slave-built roads and the ghosts of Sherman's march to the sea.

"Yankees just don't know how to act," grumbled Ingram, 60, a fire-cracker and video poker tycoon who recently ran for mayor of the nearby resort town of Hilton Head Island with a tongue-in-cheek suggestion that Yankee transplants receive a one-way bus ticket home.

"We didn't have any trouble until they started coming down here, telling us how to do things."

His is one southerner's reaction, admittedly extreme, to living in an area that is changing so dramatically — growing faster than any other region in the United States — that it no longer resembles the South of his youth — or even, for that matter, the South of the 1980s.

But Ingram, as he knows, is fighting a losing cause. The South — here in the coasts north of Savannah, Ga., and across broad swaths of the former Confederacy — in large part already is slipping out of the grasp of people considered traditional southerners.

As the region becomes more diverse and more in sync with the rest of the nation, spurred by a better-educated middle class and a vibrant, more egalitarian economy, it also appears to be forfeiting some of the distinctive qualities that always made it such a reliable stereotype — the butt of jokes and the darling of songwriters and novelists.

In more and more places in the 14 states that make up the South, people no longer know who their neighbors are. They no longer live mainly on farms and in the country; seven of 10 southerners now live in metropolitan areas, according to a recent study. They are no longer just black and white, either; Hispanics, migrating beyond Texas and Florida, make up 11 percent of the population, and the number of Asians, although smaller, has increased more than 48 percent during the 1990s alone.

And instead of people fleeing the South, as whites did during the Great Depression in search of a better way of life, and as blacks did during post-World War II in search of more equal opportunities, newcomers now are flocking here in unprecedented droves. From the Northeast, from the Midwest, even from California, they are streaming in, at a steady rate of a million a year, drawn by jobs, mild weather, a new emphasis on public and higher education and a still-affordable lifestyle that remains relatively relaxed.

They are making the southern accent almost endangered — and prompting diehards such as Ingram to broaden their definition of

The Yankees are coming

Newcomers are flooding into the American South — giving Dixieland new prosperity and a different face — much to the chagrin of old-timers.



For many Americans from north of the Mason-Dixon line, a trip South usually meant the playland of Miami. Now the Yanks are relocating, and the South is home to one in three Americans. (American Cultural Center)

Yankee. Indeed, the depopulation trend has been so fully reversed that one in three Americans — or 87 million people — call the South home.

"This is a section of the country that was insulated for 200 years by its own poverty and discrimination, and the earlier waves of immigration that rolled over the rest of the country just didn't happen here," said George Autry, president of MDC Inc., a Chapel Hill, N.C., think tank that has tracked the region's economic development for 30 years and whose recent report, "The State of the South," delineated the changes. "We have been insulated. And now we're the part of the country that is experiencing the most in-migration."

NO region in the nation is debated as passionately as the South, and no region carries more baggage from the past — the legacy of slavery and the later Jim Crow policies. More than 130 years after the final defeat at Appomattox, the Civil War still reverberates; Ingram, for one, speaks of the "war of northern aggression" as if it took place yesterday. Regional icons of that era — the Confederate flag, still flying daily outside the South Carolina Capitol; the song "Dixie" still sung at the Citadel and many other places — persist despite efforts by certain groups to remove them as symbols of racism.

But with that rebel pride there also has been a corresponding awareness that the rest of the world often viewed the southerner as backward, insular, lackadaisical about education and possessed of a

religiosity so consuming that outsiders often saw it as either dictatorial or comical. For decades, southerners assumed America was made up of themselves, and everyone else — who did not understand or care to embrace the South's peculiarities. And that is what is being "all shook up" as "The State of the South" report puts it, by the increasing variety and continuing shifts in the region's population.

The old order of the South, it seems, has become disordered. The impact is notable in the largest cities — such as Atlanta and Charlotte, N.C., both booming during the 1990s — but also is being felt in the smaller, less obvious towns, especially in the Carolinas and Georgia.

Hilton Head Island, S.C., once valued chiefly for its sea pine timber and "incorporated" only since 1983, now has 30,000 largely well-heeled newcomers, and the blacks who serve its hotels and resorts are bused in from the countryside.

Cary, N.C., in the high-tech Research Triangle area near Raleigh, has exploded from a 1990 population of not quite 45,000 to 85,000 a mere eight years later, with 50 percent of adult residents possessing college degrees. A common joke is that the town's name now rightly stands for "Corral Area for Relocated Yankees." Although the influx of newcomers grates on many old-timers' nerves, other longtime residents describe the growth as a good thing.

"In the old days, this was a one-stoplight town, and it was right outside my drugstore," said Cary phar-

macist Ralph Ashworth, who has been in business there for 42 years.

"Then IBM came in 1960, and people have been coming ever since. Frankly, I've always considered it a plus to have the diversity of new people — they've brought new ideas and a lot of the cultural things we probably wouldn't have had otherwise. Of course, you're always going to have some people who don't like change. They like the status quo. You hear them complain. 'The road goes both ways.'"

In Hickory, N.C., a town of 30,000 on the edge of the Blue Ridge Mountains, the furniture and hosiery factories that once provided blue-collar whites with stable jobs are seeking out Asian and Hispanic immigrants who also are enrolled in community college programs to learn better English. At a time when the area's unemployment rate is a scant 3 percent, the emergence of this new work force is creating few tensions, a situation that could change rapidly if real competition for unskilled jobs sets in again.

Not every part of the South, however, is undergoing a transformation. Kentucky is lagging in overall growth, as are Arkansas, Louisiana, Mississippi and West Virginia. Venture into isolated sections of northeastern North Carolina, and they look more like they did when Sir Walter Raleigh sent his parties ashore. "Autry said, despite an overall gain of nearly a half-million new residents in the state this decade, the specter of southern poverty has hardly been obliterated. A recent report by the Children's Defense Fund pointed out that one-

fourth (or 5.5 million) of southern children remain poor, and that 84 of the nation's 100 poorest counties for children are in the South.

The difference is that now, according to US Census figures, 1 million of those poor Southern children are Hispanic.

BUT the story of this newly minted South is, for now, much more a story of prosperity. Nowhere is this more obvious than in the fastest-growing area of South Carolina — Hilton Head Island. Shaped like a running shoe, the barrier isle 30 miles north of Savannah and 90 miles south of Charleston attracts 2.38 million tourists a year to its 3,000 hotel rooms, 1,000 time-share units, 23 golf courses, 300 tennis courts, eight marinas, 36 shopping areas and 236 restaurants. "Today's Hilton Head is light years removed from the isolated enclave of fishermen, lumbermen, and descendants of freed slaves, speaking their own Gullah dialect, who forged its past."

Although the area has a well-documented reputation as a haven for older residents — nearly half are older than 45 — it also has begun to attract younger families, such as the Schornings, formerly of Summit, N.J. Pete and Kim moved here three years ago with their two young daughters, followed in short order by Kim's parents, her sister and niece.

"The weather in New Jersey just didn't cooperate that much," said Kim Schorning, 36. "And we wanted to raise our kids in a nice area." (The Washington Post)

Rough time ahead for Congress

Many fear Clinton's impeachment proceedings will make it difficult for Congress to get anything done in the coming year.

By KAREN HOSLER

WASHINGTON — President Bill Clinton's gift for compartmentalizing will be put to the ultimate test next year: Can an impeached

president work with his adversaries in Congress to find a solution to sensitive political problems in an atmosphere poisoned almost beyond imagination?

A legislative agenda topped by Social Security reform — an agenda that also embraces tax cuts, health care regulation, a defense buildup and proposals for improving schools and day care for welfare mothers — holds great appeal for lawmakers as well as the White House.

But as the Senate moves to put the president on trial or censure him harshly — or both — many question whether any other legislative business can be achieved by fall, when the 2000 presidential race will begin to dominate Washington politics.

"The easy answer would be 'No,'" said Martin C. Corry, a lobbyist for the American Association of Retired Persons. "But this atmosphere is so volatile and unpredictable that anyone who says they know what's going happen is probably wrong."

Senate Minority Leader Tom Daschle, D-S.D., who is trying to work out a deal with Republicans for a censure that would allow Clinton to avoid a trial, says he is pessimistic about the prospects for legislative progress unless a speedy impeachment bargain is reached.

"We only have about nine months to get something done before the election season starts," Daschle said. "If we spend a third or more of that on a trial, then I think our opportunity for getting anything else done is lost."

But others argue that there's a countervailing force at play: Congressional Republicans share with Clinton a keen interest in being remembered for accomplishments beyond their role in the unpopular impeachment drama.

Many of the Republican senators facing re-election in two years come from Rust Belt states in the Northwest and Midwest, where many voters are more interested in federal help for their ailing cities and other economic problems than in ideological warfare against the president.

"We understand that we represent difficult states and that we have to work that much harder," said Sen. Rick Santorum, R-Pa., who will seek a second term in 2000.

"It would probably be better for us not to have a Congress where nothing gets done because we're mired in partisan battle."

At the same time, Santorum, who has made Social Security reform his top priority, said he can easily envision his sitting in judgment of Clinton as a juror while simultaneously negotiating with the president over how to restructure the federal retirement program to boost the return on its investments.

"I don't think the prospects are as bleak as everyone likes to believe," the senator said.

FOR Clinton, the political calculus is simple. Long before the Monica Lewinsky scandal broke in January, the president had zeroed in on "saving" the Social Security system as the cause he hoped to

make his legacy.

Clinton needs a victory on that front even more now, to offset the stain of impeachment. And if success requires Clinton to work side by side with his political enemies, no problem. The president is an acknowledged master at turning the other cheek.

At a White House conference on Social Security reform this month, one of the participants said he was stunned at the degree to which both Clinton and the Republican lawmakers who were present seemed to put the issue aside and deal with one another graciously.

"You would never have known that there was an impeachment debate going on simultaneously on the other end of Pennsylvania Avenue," said Robert Greenstein, executive director of the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, which is associated with liberal causes.

"I think the Republicans involved fully expect that Bill Clinton will not be removed from office, and they are looking for his leadership on this issue," added Greenstein, who now puts the odds of winning Social Security legislation during the coming term at 50 percent.

Such predictions of a productive 106th Congress are rare and, to some, seem wildly optimistic. Almost nothing but impeachment was achieved on Capitol Hill in 1998.

Congress only barely managed to complete its one essential job: providing money for the government to operate. And that was done slap-dash, at the last minute.

Obstacles to progress look even greater for the next two years.

The slim Republican majority in the House with which Republican leaders struggled to govern in the last Congress shrank further in the election, to a scant six votes. Rep. Dennis Hastert, R-Ill., the newly designated House speaker, cannot afford to alienate any of those Republicans in a bid to win support from Democrats.

Meanwhile, Senate Democrats retain the power to stop any bill they oppose — assuming that an impeachment trial has not blocked such legislation first.

What's more, the last Congress of a president's second term is usually unproductive, because the focus tends to shift quickly from the lame-duck president to the would-be successors competing for his job.

Moreover, this lame duck has been formally charged with lying by lawmakers who would be called upon to trust him now — and vice versa — in negotiations over the most popular and politically sensitive government program in the country: Social Security.

Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott, R-Miss., did not even trust that Clinton was acting in good faith when the president ordered the missile attack on Iraq on the eve of the House impeachment vote.

"Obviously, it's going to be very difficult to accomplish anything in this environment," said Marshall Wittmann, a congressional analyst with the conservative Heritage Foundation. (The Baltimore Sun)

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Senators want quick Clinton trial

WASHINGTON (AP) — The push for a speedy Senate impeachment trial is gaining momentum among key lawmakers from both parties.

But Republicans say censure should be considered only after those proceedings begin, and perhaps not before they conclude with an up-or-down vote on removing President Bill Clinton.

Democrats, meanwhile, say Clinton may not agree to a censure resolution that says he lied under oath. And talk of imposing a fine on him is slowing down, according to Minority Leader Tom Daschle.

Talks on the logistics are expected to intensify this week as the 106th Congress prepares to convene on January 6.

Senators such as Rick Santorum, R-Pa., and John Breaux, D-La., are suggesting the trial begin by the next day. Several senators said on the Sunday television talk shows

that they want the matter concluded in the first two months of the year.

Sen. Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., said censure should not be discussed until after the Senate votes on the perjury and obstruction-of-justice impeachment articles approved by the House.

"Assuming neither of those articles pass, which is what's widely expected will be the outcome... you sit down and you negotiate the censure alternative," he told Fox TV.

Republicans and Democrats agreed that any trial should be quick, given that many senators of both parties believe there is little chance that the Senate could muster the two-thirds majority to convict and remove Clinton.

Internal surveys to see whether there actually is a two-thirds majority for conviction will not begin until after the trial opens, said Senate Judiciary Committee Chairman Orrin Hatch, R-Utah.

Without the 67 votes needed, Senate leaders then would "come up with the strongest censure resolution there is," Hatch said on CBS's *Face the Nation*.

Democrats are pushing for a strongly worded censure to punish Clinton for trying to cover up his affair with Monica Lewinsky, perhaps adding a fine and admission of perjury. Sen. Daniel Patrick Moynihan, D-N.Y., said he is leading a bipartisan censure drafting effort.

Daschle, however, said Moynihan and Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott oppose adding a fine to the agreement. He added that Clinton likely would not agree to a resolution that says he lied under oath.

The matter could be a major sticking point between parties, since many Republicans believe that Clinton committed perjury.

Senators of both parties agreed that they, like seemingly most Americans, want the matter disposed of swiftly. But the timeliness

of such a trial depends heavily on the definition of speed in a chamber that prides itself on careful, often lengthy, deliberations.

Several senators suggested that the trial conclude by March, the traditional starting time for the Senate's legislative work. "Nothing happens in that first two months anyway," Moynihan said on NBC's *Meet the Press*.

A month-long, full-blown trial would "not really impede the Senate," Santorum agreed on ABC's *This Week*.

But one of Clinton's harshest Senate critics said the trial should be quicker.

"There's no reason for a long trial here. He deserves a speedy trial just like any other citizen," Sen. John Ashcroft, R-Mo., said on ABC.

Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott, R-Miss., has yet to weigh in on the length of a trial. But he has said the chamber has a constitutional responsibility to at least open such proceedings.

US Social Security: Y2K problems solved

WASHINGTON (Reuters) — The Social Security administration has resolved year 2000 computer problems, and retirement checks will be on time when the new millennium arrives, the agency's chief said yesterday.

"We have about 30-plus million lines that we have been working on to fix this issue and hundreds of people on the staff have been spending time on it, but it's now resolved," Social Security Commissioner Kenneth Apfel told NBC's *Today* show.

The White House planned a public event later in the morning to highlight Social Security's success after Apfel briefed President Bill Clinton.

The Year 2000 or "Y2K" problem, also called the "millennium

bug," stems from an old programming shortcut that resulted in many computers being unable to recognize the date change of the new century, threatening turmoil. If left uncorrected, some computers could treat the year 2000 as the year 1900, generating errors or system crashes.

Apfel said his agency tackled the problem through "plain old-fashioned hard work" and by fooling the systems with tests that simulated the year 2000 already had arrived. The immediate beneficiaries will be the estimated 46 million Americans who rely on Social Security checks each month.

"We had to bring in an independent contractor working with the Treasury Department and the Social Security administration and do an outside evaluation and make sure that those checks were going to work and I can tell you that we just passed that [test] with flying colors," Apfel said.

"A year in advance, people can be sure that their checks are going to be there on time," he added.

Problems in Social Security computers would affect older Americans who rely on the checks to help them in their retirement. For example, an eligible recipient born in 1930 would be recognized as born in 1830 without the computer fix, and could be presumed dead and removed from the rolls.

Officials from other agencies have painted a less rosy picture of year 2000 efforts in their jurisdictions.



Begging for help

A Russian woman begs in the underground crossing in Moscow yesterday, as the country is gripped by its worst economic crisis since the Soviet collapse.

(AP)

US: NATO intervention can stop Kosovo fighting

By MISHA SAVIC

PRISTINA, Yugoslavia (AP) — After days of clashes left at least 14 people dead in Kosovo, the head of the group overseeing a fragile truce is questioning whether the peace mission can continue without cooperation by the warring sides.

International peace verifiers reported that the province was quiet yesterday following an offensive last week by Serb forces.

But a spokesman for the top ethnic Albanian politician in Kosovo warned that only a NATO military intervention could prevent further fighting in Kosovo, where ethnic Albanians form the overwhelming majority.

Artillery, mortar and machine-gun fire sounded for hours Sunday across the snowy fields of rebel-controlled territory as the two sides fought from trenches, villages and dirt roads.

An ethnic Albanian human rights group reported that a fighter from the rebel Kosovo Liberation Army had died, bringing the four-day death toll to at least 14 from

fighting centered near the KLA stronghold of Lapastica and neighboring Obranca.

At least four more people — three Serb policemen and a Serb civilian — were wounded as the worst period of violence in months continued in the secessionist province in southern Serbia, the dominant republic of Yugoslavia.

More than 1,000 people have been killed since Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic began an offensive against the rebels in February, and about 300,000 people have been driven from their homes.

A shaky truce has been in effect since October, but neither side has shown a willingness to negotiate a settlement. The KLA insists on independence while the Serbian government says it will never let Kosovo go.

The chairman of the Organization of Security and Cooperation in Europe, Polish Foreign Minister Bronislaw Geremek, said the fighting raised doubts about the commitment to peace on both sides and the effectiveness of the international verification force.

Cyprus to decide if it wants to deploy missiles

NICOSIA (Reuters) — Cyprus will decide today whether to go ahead with a controversial deployment of Russian missiles which Turkey has threatened to destroy if they are brought to the divided Mediterranean island.

With the Russian manufacturers impatient to ship the S-300 missiles before a year-end deadline, President Glafcos Clerides left for Athens yesterday and will see Greek Prime Minister Costas Karamanlis today.

It will be their second meeting on the much-debated missile deal in as many months. A meeting of Cypriot party leaders last week showed they were split down the middle on the merits of bringing the defensive anti-aircraft missiles to Cyprus.

Clerides has two options: He could send the \$500 million system to the Greek island of Crete for storage. That would place Turkey well out of the missiles' 150-kilometer range — a key objection voiced by Ankara when the order was placed in early 1997.

But Clerides would suffer the

humiliation at home of reneging on a pledge that many say got his government elected 10 months ago.

Or he could deploy the missiles in Cyprus and risk heightening tensions with Turkey and derailing the island's hopes of European Union membership.

Clerides will return to Cyprus later today and go to an emergency session of the National Council, an all-party consultative body on the Cyprus problem. Government officials said a final decision would be announced immediately afterwards.

"I do not plan to make any statements before visiting Athens," Clerides told journalists before leaving yesterday.

Under a 1993 pact, Athens is bound to defend Cyprus in case of renewed hostilities with Turkey, which invaded the northern part of the island in 1974 after a brief Greek-inspired coup.

The Greek Cypriot-led government in Nicosia ordered the missiles in January 1997 and has refused to yield to Western pressure to cancel the deal.

WORLD

in brief

Pakistan stops Bhutto from traveling abroad

KARACHI (AP) — Pakistani authorities yesterday blocked former prime minister Benazir Bhutto from traveling to Dubai, saying she cannot go abroad because of ongoing corruption cases against her. Bhutto, the opposition leader and two-time prime minister, was traveling to Dubai to celebrate New Year's with her three children, who are studying there.

"They showed me a written order that I can't go abroad," Bhutto told reporters at the Karachi airport. She said she will file a contempt suit against the government because there is no court order banning her from leaving the country. A court will hear her lawyer's challenge to the travel ban today.

Arab League ministers' meeting postponed

CAIRO (AP) — An emergency meeting of Arab foreign ministers, scheduled tomorrow to discuss the US-British air strikes on Iraq, has been postponed until after Ramadan. Arab League Secretary-General Esmat Abdel-Meguid told reporters yesterday that the meeting has been rescheduled for January 24. He said the delay had been requested by Gulf states.

Algeria: Rebels massacred 15 villagers

ALGIERS (Reuters) — Moslem rebels cut the throats of 15 villagers, including eight children, on Sunday, government security forces said yesterday. Five villagers were also wounded in the attack at Zmala hamlet in Ain Defla province, 130 kilometers southwest of Algiers, the security forces said.

Museum accused of housing looted artifacts

BOSTON (AP) — For the third time in the past year, the Boston Museum of Fine Arts is in the spotlight for housing artifacts that may have been looted. First, Guatemala demanded the return of art plundered from ancient Mayan graves. Then came reports that a 1904 painting by Impressionist Claude Monet was stolen by the Nazis during World War II. Now as many as 61 Greek and Roman antiquities housed at the museum may also have been illegally excavated and smuggled, *The Boston Globe* reported. MFA Director Malcolm Rogers refused to discuss the museum's collecting ethics with the *Globe*.

Six children killed in Detroit blaze

DETROIT (AP) — Six children died in a fire at their grandmother's home on Sunday while their mother was at a hospital after having a baby. The fire rushed up a stairway and trapped the children in two upstairs bedrooms. Their grandmother and three others escaped. The fire started in a living room closet and appeared accidental, but its cause was not yet known, fire Lt. Katrina Butler said. Killed in the blaze were five daughters and a son of Feameeka O'Steen, 27. Her daughters were 2, 5, 6, 8 and 11; her son was 7. She had a boy on Christmas Day.

Prison brawl in Hong Kong injures 53

HONG KONG (AP) — Mainland Chinese and Hong Kong prisoners at a medium-security prison attacked each other with stools and fists yesterday in a fight that left 53 people injured, the government reported. Among those injured were two prison officers, the statement said.

A government statement said the brawl erupted just as about 240 prisoners at the Ma Po Ping prison sat down for breakfast. The violence was apparently triggered by the beating of two local prisoners by a number of mainland Chinese inmates during a dispute over a running competition on Sunday, the statement said.

Coroner to investigate fatal Disneyland accident

ANAHEIM, California (AP) — A tourist who was struck in the head by a piece of flying metal while waiting to board a sailing ship at Disneyland has died, the first ride-related fatality at the theme park since 1984. Luan Plu Dawson, of Duvall, Washington, was brain-dead for nearly 11 hours before life support was removed Saturday, his doctors said.

The Orange County Coroner's Office said it would investigate Thursday's accident, which also left Dawson's wife, Lien Vuong, 43, and a Disneyland employee hospitalized.

A mooring rope ripped a 30 cm.-long metal cleat from the hull of the *Columbia*, the park's sailing ship, and hurled it into a crowd on Christmas Eve.

Romanians in hospital after Christmas binges

BUCHAREST (AP) — Thousands of Romanians crammed hospital emergency rooms after stuffing themselves with pork, pickled cabbage and prune alcohol over Christmas holidays, local media reported yesterday.

About 3,500 Romanians have called ambulances since Christmas Eve in Bucharest alone and thousands more were treated elsewhere for ulcers and gastritis over the weekend, Bucharest newspaper *Libertatea* reported yesterday.

Hospitals nationwide are prepared for more patients as Romanians continue the traditional indulgence of food and drink through New Year's Day. Doctors say sarmale, made of spicy minced meat and pickled cabbage, generally cause most cases of indigestion.

22 injured in Indonesian rioting

By IRWAN FIRDAUS

IAKARTIA, Indonesia (AP) — Mobs armed with sickles and swords battled each other and hurled gasoline bombs at houses and shops in an Indonesian town yesterday. At least 22 people were injured, and hundreds fled their homes.

The riots in the town of Poso on Sulawesi Island were triggered by weekend brawls between rival gangs of youths. The unrest escalated into attacks by townspeople on the homes of migrants from the heavily populated island of Java.

Poso is 1,500 kilometers north-east of the capital, Jakarta.

Rioters set fire to as many as 20 buildings and pelted the bus station with stones, a local resident, Hajj Fanna, said by telephone.

The center of the town was blackened from the smoke billowing into the sky, Fanna said.

She was preparing food for civilian guards who patrolled neighborhoods, fearing more violence.

At least 100 families fled to a mountain outside Poso, while others sheltered with relatives.

Five escapees from Tennessee prison recaptured; one at large

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (AP) — Five of the six prisoners who used a pre-dawn Ramadan meal as an opportunity to overpower their guards were recaptured within a day and a half of their escape. The search continued for Aaron Tyrone James, 24, sentenced to 50 years for second-degree murder, kidnapping and robbery.

Lyle Thomas Van Ulzen, 33, serving 65 years for second-degree murder and arson, and Jay Roy Denton, 32, serving seven years for burglary and escape, were found yesterday morning in an industrial area about three miles from Riverbend Maximum Security Institution, according to Jim Rose, assistant commissioner for operations for the state Department of Correction.

Michael Wayne Perry, 26, who is awaiting trial on first-degree murder charges, and William Kirk Riley, 33, serving a life sentence for murder, had been captured around Sunday night at the edge of a residential area about five kilometers from the prison, department spokesman Pam Hobbins said.

Billy Jackson Coffelt, 44, sentenced to life for being a habitual criminal, was found early yesterday about three kilometers from the facility, she said.

Coffelt and another inmate had been allowed out of their cells to distribute meals for Ramadan at the prison, along the Cumberland River on the outskirts of town. Many of the prison's inmates are Moslem.

The inmates, at least one armed with a homemade knife, overpowered two guards, took their radios and jackets, and chained them to chairs with handcuffs and leg irons, Hobbins said.

One of them then got into the control room and was able to open the cell doors of the other inmates, she said.

"They commandeered the officer [in the control room] and were able to get control of all the electronics and get out quickly," Hobbins said. None of the guards was injured, she said.

Investigators aren't sure how the inmates got outside. But once they did, they used a ladder to scale two 3.5-meter fences surrounding the grounds, placed a mattress over the fences' razor wire, and escaped at about 5:30 a.m.

"There was a trail of blood, which gave evidence that some of them had been cut on the razor wire on the fence," Hobbins said.

Officials were alerted when the guards were late in reporting a scheduled head count.

State and local police set up

checkpoints and helicopters were searching for the escapees. They were dressed in blue jeans and blue prison shirts with white T-shirts.

The prison, home to death row and built in 1989, is one of several in the mostly industrial, wooded area.

Several residential neighborhoods are a few kilometers away.

In March, James and another convicted killer used a homemade knife to commandeer a delivery truck and drove it through a fence at the prison, but guards shot out the tires before they escaped.

James was placed in maximum security afterward, Hobbins said.

The only successful escape was in October 1995 when four inmates rode out in a hidden compartment in a truck.

They were recaptured and a prison employee who helped them was convicted of aiding the escape.

Tennessee Gov. Don Sundquist warned motorists not to pick up strangers and offered a \$5,000 reward for information leading to James' capture and conviction.

"We will work around the clock to ensure the safety and protection of the public," he said.

Israel's Southern Landscapes

by Aviva Bar-Am & Yisrael Shalem

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The other opposition

There is something refreshing about the just-proclaimed candidacy of MK Ze'ev (Benny) Begin. Amongst a sea of politicians who seem to be mainly interested in clamoring onto the nearest political life raft, Begin stands almost alone for a pure, ideological position. If the departure of Dan Meridor speaks volumes about Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's integrity problem, Begin's departure illustrates a similar collapse of Netanyahu's ideological credentials.

Before the Likud faithful on Sunday, Netanyahu tamed his opponents to the Left with the same broad brush. Yesterday, Begin did Netanyahu one better, and lumped the Likud together with Labor and the expected Meridor-Shahak party as three indistinguishable "center" parties.

Begin's claim to be alone (aside from the two-seat Mokedet) in representing the "national camp" is not just election bluster. Begin is right that a sharp line separates him from the other parties; they will implement a territorial compromise according to the Oslo Accords, he would not.

In a sense, Begin represents what Netanyahu is, even now, accused of attempting - the scuttling of the Oslo Accords. Though Begin's candidacy is thought of as a devastating blow to Netanyahu, it is also a form of vindication: It is the surest indication that much of Netanyahu's own constituency believes he is committed to Oslo, even as much of the Left and the outside world believes he is not.

Netanyahu's problem is that, for all his efforts, he has managed to convince those who support Oslo that he will kill it, and those who oppose Oslo that he is slavishly committed to it. On this score, both sides cannot be right. The Hebron and Wye agreements are evidence that Begin's critique of Netanyahu is the more honest and accurate one.

As incisive as Begin's critique may be, he falls far short in the prescriptive department. Jeremiads may be useful in the backbenches, but they can only go so far as a program to lead the nation. Begin insists that there is an alternative to some form of Palestinian state that the other three parties will bring upon Israel. But, for all his honesty and forthrightness, he has yet to describe his alternative blueprint for peace and security and how he plans to achieve it.

As far as it is possible to discern, Begin's program for peace is the same as that of another bitter Netanyahu opponent, Yitzhak Shamir: "Just say no." And yet in saying no, Begin somehow manages to sound more conciliatory than Netanyahu's yes. In launching his candidacy, Begin spoke of the Palestinians as our "neighbors" and of the need to find a way to live with them, along with repeated references to a "PLO-Hamas alliance." The day before, in his speech to the Likud, Netanyahu began with an attack on Yasser Arafat, and quoted from a speech by Palestinian Legislative Council Speaker Ahmed Qurei in which he called for a Palestinian state based on the 1947 UN partition plan.

Netanyahu, knowing a perfect foil when he sees one, went on to claim that only he will defend Beersheba and Ashkelon from Palestinian clutches, since those cities are located on territory the Palestinians are now claiming as theirs.

Of course, it is not useful for the Palestinians to belatedly attempt to resurrect the partition plan, accepted by Israel at that time and so violently rejected by the Arab world. But listening to Netanyahu rail against the duplicity of the Palestinians might make one wonder why he has not joined Begin's new party.

Netanyahu's problem is that the more he would implement Oslo, the more he felt he had to sound as if he were a card-carrying member of the Land of Israel Front. He would do this by attacking the Palestinians, blaming Labor for Oslo, and seeming to relish conflict with the United States. But these tactics robbed him of the standing necessary to shame the opposition into joining in his demands, which in turn allowed the Palestinians to further shirk their responsibilities.

Begin's way out of this vicious circle is to try to turn the clock back and start over. Sometimes, he is honest enough to speak of the price that Israel would pay for such a course, while arguing that the longer Israel waits, the more that cost rises. By continuing to sound his warnings, Begin is providing a sharp, clear voice outside of the national consensus, a voice that must be heard for, ironically, the good of the peace process and the health of Israeli democracy. The challenge before the other three parties is to show that they can best lead the consensus, and to prove Begin wrong.

Before his time

YOSSI BEILIN

There is much to be said both for and against Amnon Lipkin-Shahak's candidacy for prime minister. The Right sees him as a popular contender who may take votes away from the rightist camp and conduct a more left-wing policy.

But some in the peace camp - such as myself - are concerned that a split may well return Netanyahu to power, by directing all our energy to a superfluous internal argument as to who is better - Ehud Barak or

It is also one of the most difficult positions. Some were more suited to the job than others, but all who held it found it an immensely heavy burden.

You cannot succeed in this job without experience. We have seen the heavy price we've had to pay for Benjamin Netanyahu's lack of experience, from the Bar-On Affair and the release of Sheikh Yassin, to the Western Wall tunnel episode and other clumsy errors.

Shahak, who is a wonderful per-

Amnon Lipkin-Shahak is personable, brave and capable. But he's a man in his mid-fifties who's never lived a day as an ordinary citizen

Shahak.

To counter this, Shahak's supporters claim that his chances of beating Netanyahu are greater than those of any other candidate, and he is therefore compelled to run. About this, we will all be wiser to six months' time.

However, there is one issue that goes beyond who will win the elections and stands aside from the difficult disputes between those who support Oslo and those who oppose it. This involves who is capable of actually leading the country from the prime minister's seat.

This is one of the most important positions in the world. No Israeli prime minister has ever vacated the post having decided he "has done his bit" and that the time had come to give his successor a chance. Those prime ministers who ended their terms while still alive did so with a broken heart.

son, who has served his people loyally and has shown ability, is even more inexperienced.

ISRAEL has never had a prime minister who was just a few months out of uniform. Shahak began his military career as a youngster at a military academy and 40 years later he retired from the army. Decorated with ranks and medals though he may be, he is a man in his mid-fifties who has not lived even one day as an ordinary citizen.

I salute his courage for being willing to take upon himself a position of this nature without any experience; he clearly believes he is prepared to enter the Knesset for the first time in his life as prime minister, to convene cabinet meetings, make diplomatic decisions, be decisive during a crisis in the capital markets, determine the target for inflation and handle the crises between Israel and the Jewish

Dry Bones



community in the Diaspora.

But while I salute him, I am not prepared to take the risk, just as no one would be prepared to be a passenger in an aircraft that I was piloting before I had learned to fly.

A position of this sort cannot be assumed without any experience at all, even if you are clever, talented and personable. We must not make this mistake.

Some people say that after Shahak has revealed himself and presented his views, he will make enemies and

lose his popularity. This may or may not be the case.

But presenting one's views is, in any case, insufficient. One also has to know how to turn a worldview into reality - how to set priorities and then implement them.

Amnon Shahak does not know how to do this. By contrast, the experience garnered by Labor Party leader Ehud Barak in civilian life has shown him how, and this makes him better qualified to actualize the hopes of Israel's peace camp.

Primary problems

EVELYN GORDON

well known. When Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu faces off against MK Uzi Landau in the Likud (which has kept a primary for its prime ministerial candidate), the race will be between two household names.

This is not the case in Knesset primaries, however. In these races,

Except for Labor, no party is planning to offer voters any say in who gets to run for Knesset

incumbent MKs are almost the only people on the ballot with national name recognition. Their opponents are generally known, at best, only to a handful of local party activists. Since the vote, in most cases, is nationwide, the non-incumbents are at a tremendous disadvantage in trying to muster enough support to gain a realistic place on the list.

Even more important, however, is that there are never more than a handful of prime ministerial candidates, which means that a protest vote can be effective.

If there are only two candidates, for instance, the challenger does not even have to be widely known. All it takes is for more than 50 percent of the voters to be so disgusted with the incumbent that they are willing to try anything in his stead, and therefore cast their votes for his opponent.

and told to check off the ones they want. The candidate with the most votes gets the first-place slot on the list, the candidate with the next largest number of votes gets the second-place slot, and so forth.

THE problem with this system, of course, is that it makes a protest vote impossible.

Let's say that I wanted to get rid of a certain MK - call him Shlomo. I could decline to mark his name on my ballot slip, but which of the dozens of other names should I mark in his stead?

There might be tens of thousands of voters nationwide who all want to get rid of Shlomo. But since each of us is likely to pick a different candidate in his stead, Shlomo will probably still get more votes from the minority that supports him than will

any of the candidates among whom his opponents will scatter their vote.

None of this, however, means that the Likud took the right path in abolishing primaries entirely and returning all power to the central committee. The solution to one system that fails to give the voters any real choice is not another system that does the same.

The only real solution that would permit voter choice is a move to regional primaries. This is why primaries work in the US: Within each region, only a handful of candidates are competing, so a protest vote against the incumbent is possible. Furthermore, it is much easier for a challenger to make himself known within a confined geographic region than it is for him to make himself known nationwide.

In 1996, Labor did use a regional primary system to fill some of the slots on its list, and this did result in a number of new faces in the Knesset.

Regional primaries are unlikely to become the norm, however, unless the electoral system is amended to permit direct regional elections of MKs. Once that has happened, regional primaries to choose each party's local candidate would be a natural consequence.

If the voters truly want to have a say in who sits in the Knesset, therefore, direct regional elections of MKs are the only solution. Without that, party primaries will never be more than a worthless farce.

Human rights at 50

IRWIN COTLER

the other hand, an increasing number of Israeli Jews are internalizing, if not propagating the indictment, believing that Israel is the "oppressor" and the Palestinians the "victims" - that, in a word, the indictment may well be right about what it says about us.

Nor is this polarizing "fallout" from the indictment limited to Israel alone. Indeed, in the North

For Israel, rooted in the Jewish people - as an Abrahamic people - is the First Nation of humankind. In a word, the Jewish people are a prototypical aboriginal people, just as the Jewish religion is the prototypical aboriginal religion, the first of the Abrahamic religions.

2. The State of Israel - as a political/judicial entity - overlaps with the "aboriginal Jewish homeland."

The human rights of Israel are also deserving of respect

American political culture, Jews are increasingly distancing themselves from Israel, a phenomenon unrelated to the portrayal of Israel in the human rights culture, and particularly its "politically incorrect" status in the campus culture.

But I want to suggest that we ignore human rights at our peril, and the peril of our case and cause. For a Jewish commitment to human rights is not only a statement of what we must do, but who we are; while the belief in the justice of one's cause is a people's strongest strategic asset.

WHAT, then, can we say to all this? More importantly, what can we do?

Herewith some perspectives for the 50th anniversary of both Israel and the human rights revolution as 1998 draws to a close:

1. Israel is not simply a snapshot at age 50, or a fragment frozen in time. It is not a CNN clip, or what passes for virtual reality in the Internet of the day. Nor is it anchored only in fifty years of Israeli statehood, or 100 years of Zionism.

it is, in international legal terms, a successor state to the biblical or aboriginal Jewish kingdoms. But that aboriginal homeland is also claimed by another people - the Palestinian Arab people - that sees it as their place and patrimony.

The existence of a parallel claim does not vitiate that of the Jewish people, or cause it to resonate any less as memory and memoir of homeland - where homeland represents history, roots, religion, culture, language, literature, family, myth, and values.

But the equities of claim mandate the logic of Israeli-Palestinian partition - a logic which in moral and juridical terms requires that a just solution be organized around "the principle of least injustice," and that it includes recognition of the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people, including its right to self-determination.

3. The internal existential divides besetting Israel at 50 - including the corrosive kulturkampf - should not mask the existential raison d'être of Israel itself. In a word, Nazism almost succeeded, not only because

of its pathology of hate and industry of death, but because of the vulnerability of the powerless, and the powerlessness of the Jew.

Israel, then, is an antidote to Jewish powerlessness, the raison d'être in the most profound existential sense, for Jewish self-determination.

4. This is not to say that Israel should be above the law, or that Israel should not be accountable for any violations of human rights law. On the contrary, Israel, like any other state, is responsible for any violations of international law, and the Jewish people are not entitled to any privilege or preference because of the Holocaust or the sufferings of Jewish history.

But the problem is not that Israel should seek to be above the law, but that Israel has been systematically denied equality before the law in the international arena; not that Israel should respect human rights - which she must - but that the human rights of Israel are also deserving of respect; not that human rights standards should be applied to Israel - which they should - but they must be applied equally to everyone else.

In the end, we come back to the beginning - that whatever the divides from within or drums from without - 1998 is not 1938. There is a Jewish state as an antidote to Jewish powerlessness, and a vehicle for Jewish self-determination; there is a Jewish people with untold resources, moral and material; there are men and women of good will - non-Jews - prepared to join in standing up and being counted for common cause - of Israel and human rights at 50.

The writer is professor of law at McGill University and an international human rights lawyer.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

UNREASONABLE TV TAX

Sir, - One of the standard considerations given to low-income Israelis is relief from the burden of paying the television license fee. While able-bodied and senior citizens with limited incomes are given discounts and exemptions, however, the disabled are required to pay the full license fee - regardless of income. This includes disabled pensioners with no other means of support who receive only NIS 1,500 per month on which to live and meet their essential health care needs.

In late 1997, I was forced to cancel my standing payment order for the license fee as a critical cost-saving measure during a financial crisis so severe I was unable even to pay for my monthly medicines. Because I have been unable to make payment since then, the Israel Broadcast Authority last week issued a foreclosure of property notice to my bank, garnishing

my account in the amount of NIS 755 NIS - one-half of my disability pension (and far more than my TV is worth to anyone but me).

Preventing this catastrophe (hopefully) required several humiliating days of negotiations with an IBA collection clerk who was initially unwilling to accept installments without a credit card (which are not issued to "people like me") and told me point-blank she does not care if I have medicine or food, as long as I pay the IBA.

The IBA has the legal right to take such punitive actions against me and every disabled person like me - not because we are bad citizens who do not want to pay, but because we are disabled and second-class citizens under existing licensing fee laws.

My only "right" in this case is to obey the law, which means that for the foreseeable future, I can no

longer choose to place my health and well-being above the television licensing fee.

For the past nine years, I have been fighting for legislation to remedy this appalling injustice. Unfortunately, our lawmakers view this as an issue of too little consequence to be bothered with.

It should, however, be a matter of great consequence to the nation and its lawmakers when any disabled Israeli is forced to pay a tax that is considered unreasonable for other citizens, or when any disabled Israeli is forced to place equal or greater priority on a television tax than food or medicine, or when any disabled Israeli is threatened with the loss of what may be their only, and irreplaceable source of entertainment.

ARLENE COHEN

Kiryat Motzkin.

NEGATIVE POLITICS

Sir, - The Labor and Meretz parties have been very highly critical of the policy of the government under our prime minister. What I have not been able to understand is their inability to articulate their own policy. The leaders of these two parties rely completely on negativism.

There is no articulation of any feeling of patriotism. Perhaps it is because this leadership formulated the unbelievably stupid Oslo agreement. Why Oslo

is such a bad agreement is self-evident. It puts Israel in the position of allowing roads cutting through the heartland of Israel to provide safe havens for all sorts of criminals and terrorists.

Furthermore, by having to provide for the Palestinians to have access to an airport and seaport, the most horrendous weapons can be smuggled in. There was also absolutely no leverage on the Palestinians to discourage them from violating commitments and, last but not least,

there was a feeling of utmost euphoria without any reason.

The citizens of Israel are waiting to hear from the leftist coalition their platform and their hopes for Israel to be able to survive in a world where the Palestinians are delighted with Iraq and Iran and their ability to produce and use weapons of mass destruction.

TOBY WILLIG

Jerusalem.

OPERATION DESERT FOX

Sir, - What a joke! I do not see the point in antagonizing the whole Arab world just to destroy a few buildings and give the opportunity for the Arab PR machine to get in motion.

You only have to watch the newscasts coming out of Baghdad and other Arab countries - women and children crying and everything that goes with it. For what? Saddam Hussein is

still there and laughing his head off.

DAVID LEDERMAN

Givatayim.

FROM OUR ARCHIVES

65 years ago: On December 29, 1933, *The Palestine Post* reported that while the world suffered from unemployment, Palestine was an exception. There was a dire need for more workers and a severe shortage of carpenters, iron workers, blacksmiths,

plumbers and electricians in the thriving building trade. Many projects had to be curtailed and postponed for lack of labor.

50 years ago: On December 29, 1948, *The Palestine Post* reported that Israel had shot down six

Egyptian fighter planes. In Paris Israeli representatives told the UN Security Council that the Israeli offensive in the Negev came only after Israel had discovered the Egyptian plans for an offensive to be launched on December 27.

Alexander Zvielli

The man who oversaw Desert Fox

Steve Vogel reports on four-star Gen. Anthony Zinni, the 'hands-off' commander of the US attack on Iraq

When General Anthony Zinni left Saudi Arabia after a visit to the Prince Sultan Air Base earlier this month, he already had good reason to suspect that within days he would be ordering US forces in the Persian Gulf region to attack Iraq.

But Zinni, a veteran Marine who heads the US Central Command, stuck to his scheduled departure December 14, for fear that staying on would alert Iraqi intelligence that action was imminent.

"I didn't want it to somehow get out that there was a sense of urgency," Zinni said in an interview this week at the conclusion of his first visit to the Gulf region since the attack.

Zinni's decision to return to his headquarters at MacDill Air Force Base in Florida to oversee the assault also reflected the command style of the four-star general who directed the 70-hour campaign, the largest US offensive since the Gulf War in 1991.

Although outspoken and frank, Zinni is a hands-off commander.

"I don't like to get in the way of my subordinate commanders," he said. "I like to generate initiative. I like to make the decisions that they need, and pull together all the components that make them work as one, but not to micromanage what they do."

Unlike the US commander during the Gulf War, General Norman Schwarzkopf, who threw notorious tantrums that rattled his subordinates, Zinni also has a reputation as a patient and good-humored commander, popular with those who serve under him.

"You have to stay level," said Zinni, 55. "Everybody triggers on the emotions of the commander. If you're steady, they're steady."

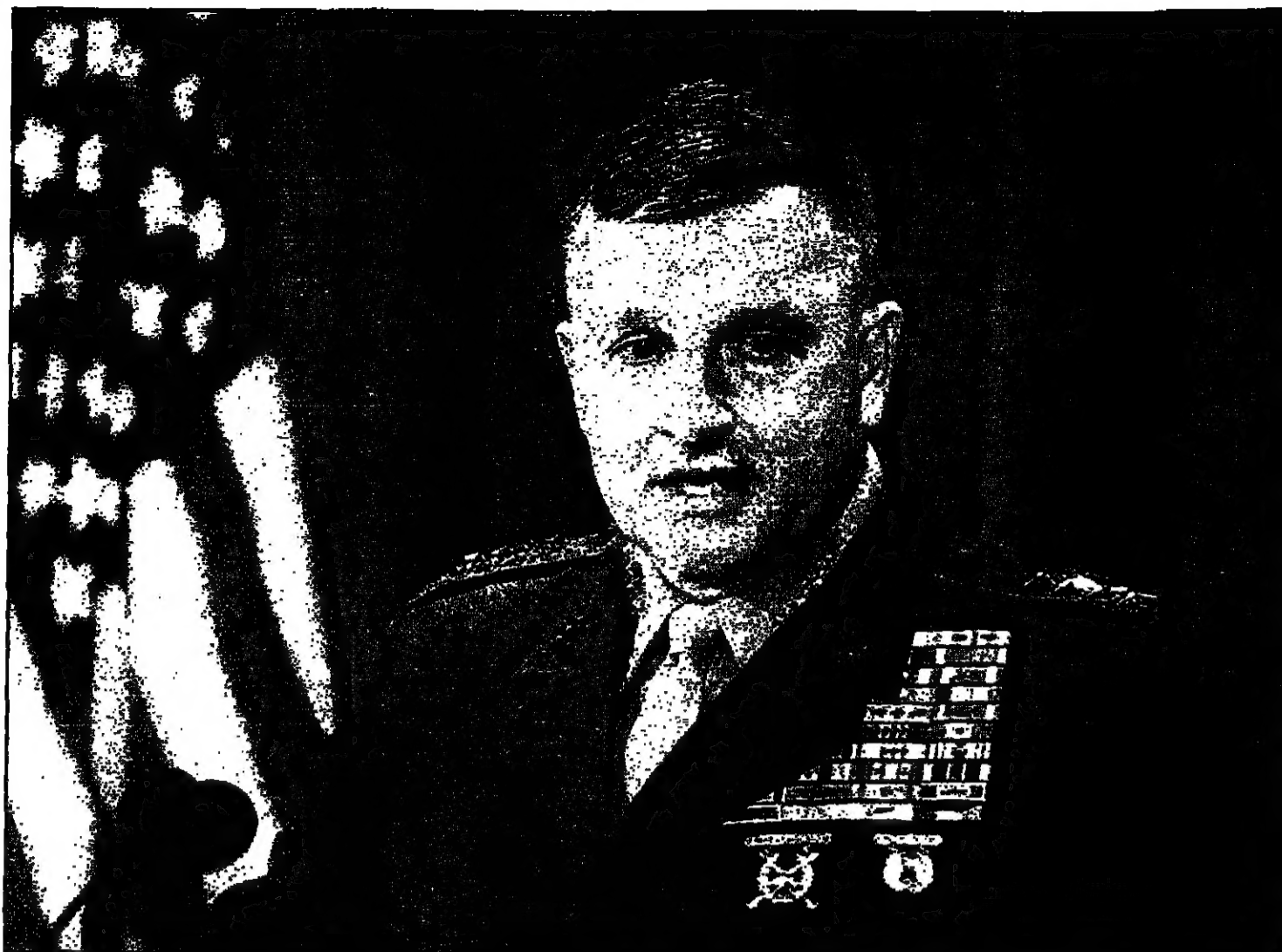
"He's an exceptional commander, because he understands the politics of using military force," said Rep. John Murtha, D-Pa., who accompanied Zinni and Defense Secretary William Cohen on the trip to visit troops in the region. "Zinni has come out very well on this operation with all of those who know something about defense."

Zinni acknowledged annoyance that Iraqi President Saddam Hussein's claims of victory are given credence in many quarters. "It is difficult to deal with the frustration that he always seems to get some political and propaganda value from this," he said. "But I honestly believe a lot of that is overstated."

The general evinced scorn for Saddam Hussein when speaking to US troops during the trip, which featured stops at the isolated Prince Sultan air base in the desert 125 kms southeast of Riyadh, the Saudi capital, as well as at Camp Doha in neighboring Kuwait.

"When I see you, there's no doubt in my mind why the sucker wouldn't fight," Zinni told Army infantrymen who cheered their commander Wednesday night at Camp Doha.

During a visit for a holiday show featuring Cohen, two members of Congress and several entertainers, Zinni left the stage early to wander around the base, looking for airmen whose duties prevented them from attending the festivities.



Zinni is good-humored and popular: He likes 'to generate initiative' and not get in the way of his subordinates. (AP)

"Since you guys didn't show up for the entertainers, I'm coming to you," Zinni told several surprised airmen who sprang to attention when the four-star general strode into their security post.

The son of Italian immigrants, Zinni was raised in a blue-collar area outside Philadelphia. He was

the youngest of four children, but the first the family could afford to send to college. At Villanova University, Zinni signed up for a Marine officer program, inspired in part by his father, who had fought in World War I a few years after immigrating to America.

Zinni intended his career in the

military to be a short one, but found himself progressively drawn in.

Sent to Vietnam in 1967 as an infantry adviser to the Vietnamese Marine Corps, Zinni lived with Vietnamese, learned the language and had very little contact with other Americans.

"I immersed myself in that cul-

ture," he said. "I saw the world differently than my peers. I viewed it through my prism." As a company commander on a second tour in Vietnam, Zinni was seriously wounded but stayed in the service after the war, rising through the ranks. In 1991 he played a key role in Provide Comfort, the Kurdish relief effort after the Gulf War.

The lessons he learned in Vietnam are sometimes difficult to apply, Zinni acknowledged, pointing to his own experiences in Somalia as director of operations for the ill-fated US intervention in 1991-92. "I think Somalia's a good example," he said. "You could make decisions that made sense in our Western framework, and miss the whole point of the culture."

In August 1997, Zinni took charge of Central Command, which has responsibility for Iraq. Senior defense officials credit Zinni with quietly positioning US forces in the region for the attack without alerting Iraq after the standoff with Saddam Hussein in early November.

Maintaining surprise was not Zinni's only concern. He thought it was possible - although unlikely - that the attacks would move Iraq to launch its army into Kuwait.

Attacks on the elite Republican Guard - strongly advocated by Zinni - were aimed at discouraging this. Zinni directed that leaflets be dropped warning the regular Iraqi Army to stay put. For whatever reason, the Iraqi units remained in place.

Despite the fact that Saddam Hussein remains in power and Iraq remains a threat, Zinni said he does not believe the US should have launched a more robust attack.

"There was no need to go beyond what we did," he said.

Zinni said that, in recent months, some senior Iraqi commanders have been removed and in some cases executed, and units re-assigned.

US analysts believe the steps were taken to shake up loyalties and prevent plotting against Saddam Hussein.

"He does more to disrupt his leadership than we do," said Zinni. "I wouldn't expect a pension if I was a general in his army."

(The Washington Post)

'Death capital of the world'

Like everything else in Texas, Christmas decorations are big. Just down the highway in Houston, a 64-display, drive-through light show is said to be the world's largest. Even in a small town such as Lufkin to the northeast, an entire city block explodes in megawatt, wall-to-wall white lights.

Here, the modest downtown gets into the spirit as well. A group of men spent a recent morning climbing up and down ladders to decorate the city's most distinctive building with gaily painted signs wishing all the happiest of holidays.

That the men are inmates and the building they're decorating is the prison where the bulk of the nation's executions takes place is something that barely rates comment here. The prison and its frequent executions are so entrenched in everyday life that they've achieved the white noise of near invisibility.

To the rest of the world, though, Huntsville increasingly represents the heart of the darkness that continues to surround the death penalty 22 years after the Supreme Court restored it. The pace of executions in the United States overall and Texas in particular has picked up dramatically in recent years, throwing a spotlight on this small city, where nearly one-third of the country's death penalties have been carried out.

"We're known as the death capital of the world, unfortunately," John Strickland, owner of a downtown restaurant, said ruefully of Huntsville.

Last Friday, the number of executions in the United States since capital punishment was reinstated reached 500 when a man who had murdered an elderly couple was put to death by lethal injection in South Carolina.

In states where the death penalty is rarely carried out, executions still have some shock value and generate blanket media coverage.

In Texas, though, it takes extraordinary circumstances to pique widespread interest - the February execution of Karla Faye Tucker, the ax-murderer who became the first woman put to death in Texas since the Civil War, or the 11th-hour stay of execution in early December that spared the life of a Canadian citizen whose case had drawn outrage among diplomatic officials.

More commonly, executions come and go with little attention beyond a prison staff carrying out its careful, clinical procedures and a group of anti-death penalty protesters making their predictable stand outside "The Walls," as the two-block prison complex is called for its massive brick facades.

"It's like living on a military base that has nuclear weapons. You just don't think about it on a daily basis," said James Marquart, a professor of criminal justice at

Huntsville, Texas, is a place of prisons - one where executions are routine. Jean Marbella writes about the town outsiders see as 'the heart of darkness'

Sam Houston State University.

Still, he says the executions hover like "a kind of cloud" over the city. For all the stereotypes of big-talking, law-and-order Texans proudly leading the nation in executions, the death penalty is a real rather than theoretical event here, and opinions about it can be more nuanced than expected.

Strickland, whose Cafe Texan is two blocks from the prison, said he generally supports the death penalty, but believes it should be carried out only against the most outrageous, cold-blooded murderers. The circus atmosphere generated by some executions has begun to bother him.

"With Karla Faye Tucker, everyone was saying, 'Oh, it brought you tons of business,'" said Strickland, who bought the 72-year-old restaurant in 1996. "We did have a 10, 15 percent increase in business, but afterward I decided if we ever have another major execution, I'll close for the day rather than take the money. I don't feel good about profiting from someone else's misfortune."

THE 149-year-old Walls, Texas' oldest state penitentiary, seems like a benign neighbor. Pink and red roses bloom outside its main entrance, and, like good neighbors, inmates can be seen maintaining the property.

While death row inmates are housed about 12 miles northeast in a facility memorialized in Steve Earle's mournful song, "Ellis Unit One," they are brought to Walls for execution.

The Death House, as the area where the executions take place is called, is located in the northeast corner of the complex. In 1924, Texas began conducting all executions here.

Even without executions, Huntsville would be notable for its concentration of prisons: In addition to Walls, seven prisons are located in or near the city, housing more than 7,400 inmates. They are counted in the city's population, which is about 29,000. On the other side of the law, Huntsville is also home to the Texas Department of Criminal Justice, which has about 6,700 employees in the area.

The second largest presence in Huntsville is Sam Houston State University, but it, too, has a link to the prison industry: The nation's largest criminal justice education facility is located here, and inmate labor was used to construct a 200,000-square-foot complex for it.

"It's just something that's there;

we have no control over it," Strickland said of the local prison industry. "It's kind of like Detroit with its auto production and the pollution it produces."

TO those opposed to the death penalty, Huntsville symbolizes much of what is wrong with the system: The ultimate punishment is meted out in a highly irregular

manner across the country. A large state such as California, for example, has put to death only five convicts since 1976, while a relatively small state such as Louisiana has executed 24.

"In Texas, they generally do not put much into the legal defense of death-penalty cases," said Richard Dieter, director of the Washington-based Death Penalty

More than its share of blame

Huntsville is called to answer for more than its share of responsibility for the executions carried out in its midst.

After witnessing more than 100 executions over eight years, radio reporter Wayne Sorge said he's only seen two that involved a crime in Huntsville.

"And the first one was for a crime that took place inside a prison," he said. "More often than not, it's a jury in Houston that made the decision. It's people in Houston who elect the judges and the prosecutors."

"Everything, from the decision to commit the crime to the jury that sentences someone to die is from Houston, and then a contingency of (anti-death penalty activists) stationed in Houston comes here and starts screaming about it."

Sorge, who has witnessed executions for the past eight years as a stringer for United Press International, said he tries not to let the experience become routine. "Every case is different, every person is different," he said.

Some cases get to him more than others: There was the convict who seemed mentally deficient, not really cognizant of what was going on, and who had been brutally abused as a child, Sorge said. There are the convicts whom he has previously interviewed on death row. And then there is the doctor who pronounces the executed person dead.

"He's the same doctor in the emergency room at our hospital here," Sorge said. "I sometimes wonder, what if I have a traffic accident and I'm brought there and I see him over me?"

-J.M.

Information Center, which opposes capital punishment. "There's no statewide public defenders network, and the representation is very uneven."

While more than 70 percent of Americans are said to support the death penalty, that figure is believed to be even higher in the Huntsville area.

Huntsville residents have had to confront their feelings about executions, if only because the international news media increasingly has descended on the city to report on what many foreigners consider an appalling practice. (The United States and Japan are the only major democracies with capital punishment.)

Mary McClain recalled a French reporter who badgered her until she admitted she favored capital punishment.

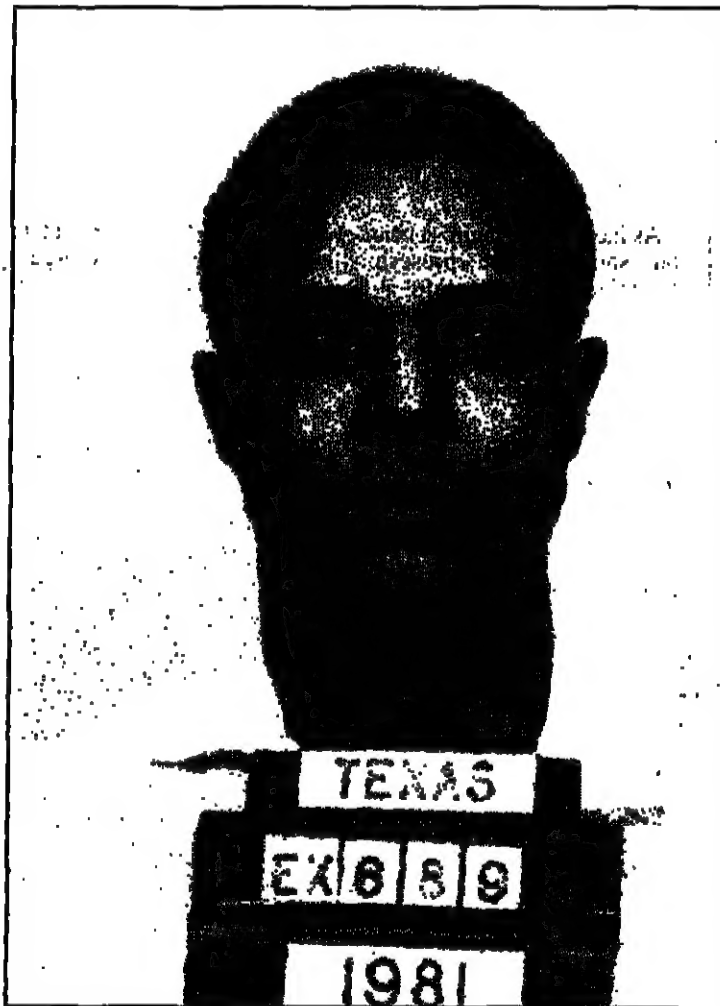
"Why should I be surprised," she quoted the reporter as telling her, "since all you Texans are be-headers."

"I felt like saying, 'Honey, there's the door and you can just walk out of it,'" she said. "I don't go to France and tell you how to run your business."

McClain, a retired educator, is a volunteer at the Texas Prison Museum, a creepy collection of artifacts ranging from a no-longer-used electric chair to scary contraband confiscated from inmates over the years to Prisoner No. 321's handwritten instructions for his final meal.

McClain gives a group of visiting students a scared-straight sort of talk, showing them the replica of a cell and asking them to imagine spending years in there with a roommate they might hate and no air-conditioning.

Behind the counter, there are T-shirts - "I did time in Huntsville" - Ellis Unit death row caps and other souvenirs for sale.



James Ronald Meanes, 42, was scheduled to die this month for shooting a guard in Houston: The executions hover over the city like a cloud. (AP)

The message is hard to discern: Just how does Huntsville feel about its role in the capital punishment debate? "It's not anything to be ashamed of," McClain said, "but you don't go about bragging about it."

Huntsville's relationship to its prisons is a complicated and oddly intimate one. Seemingly everyone who works for or is related to someone who works for the prison system. People talk about growing up "on" the units as the children of guards

or medical personnel or other on-site employees, and having inmates regularly in their homes as housekeepers.

No one can quite pinpoint why so many prisons ended up in their midst.

"It's related to when we were vying to be the state capital of Texas," said Marquart, the Sam Houston State University professor. "But then, Austin got the capital and we got the joint."

(The Baltimore Sun)

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Windy in paradise

Dear Ruthie,
A few months ago, I met a most charming woman, and from the first minute we hit it off wonderfully. She has all the attributes a man might want in a woman: beauty, intelligence, common sense, a great sense of humor. She even cooks delicious meals, a rare talent in today's modern woman. (I do the dishes.)

I want to marry her, set up a home, and have children. In other words, I want to settle down with her.

There is one embarrassing problem, however. She is flustered, particularly during lovemaking. At first I thought this was hilarious. But lately it has begun to grate on my nerves.

We have tried to solve this by changing positions, but nothing has really helped. I asked her to seek medical help. Her refusal leads me to think it might be psychological help she needs.

Her attitude is that I must take her as she is, with all her good points and all her bad ones. "You have to agree that my good points far outnumber my shortcomings," she says.

I am at my wit's end. I know I should laugh the whole thing off, but I am afraid that her refusal to seek help is a sign of a much more serious, underlying problem.

Can you give me some advice? I am writing this with her full consent.

Upwind
Somewhere in Israel

Dear Upwind,

The "serious, underlying problem" - if there is one - probably has more to do with your cold feet about making a commitment than with your girlfriend's refusal to seek help.

If she has some kind of gastrointestinal condition, her own discomfort will undoubtedly push her to seek medical attention. If she has no real medical problem, she may feel that she is being attacked for something she wants you to accept as a minor "short-

Dear Ruthie



Ruthie Blum

coming." This is particularly true if your initial response to her flustered lovemaking was laughter and your subsequent attitude has been one of annoyance.

Since it is you, and not she, who is seeking advice, I can only address your part in the dynamic. And since you, and not she, considers "wind" a hitch to getting hitched, I can only offer you some insight into why it bothers you so much.

Your description of the ideal partner, one with "all the attributes a man might want in a woman," leads me to the conclusion that, like many people searching for - yet afraid of finding - a mate for life, you have created a long checklist for a potential spouse.

This in itself is problematic, for it means that rather than seeking a certain kind of feeling when you are around a woman, you are seeking someone with a suitable curriculum vitae. As a result, any woman with flaws necessarily scores lower on the invisible test you are giving her.

If, instead, you were to focus on how happy you feel around a member of the opposite sex, or on how good she makes you feel about yourself, you would have less difficulty in accepting some not quite satisfactory trait.

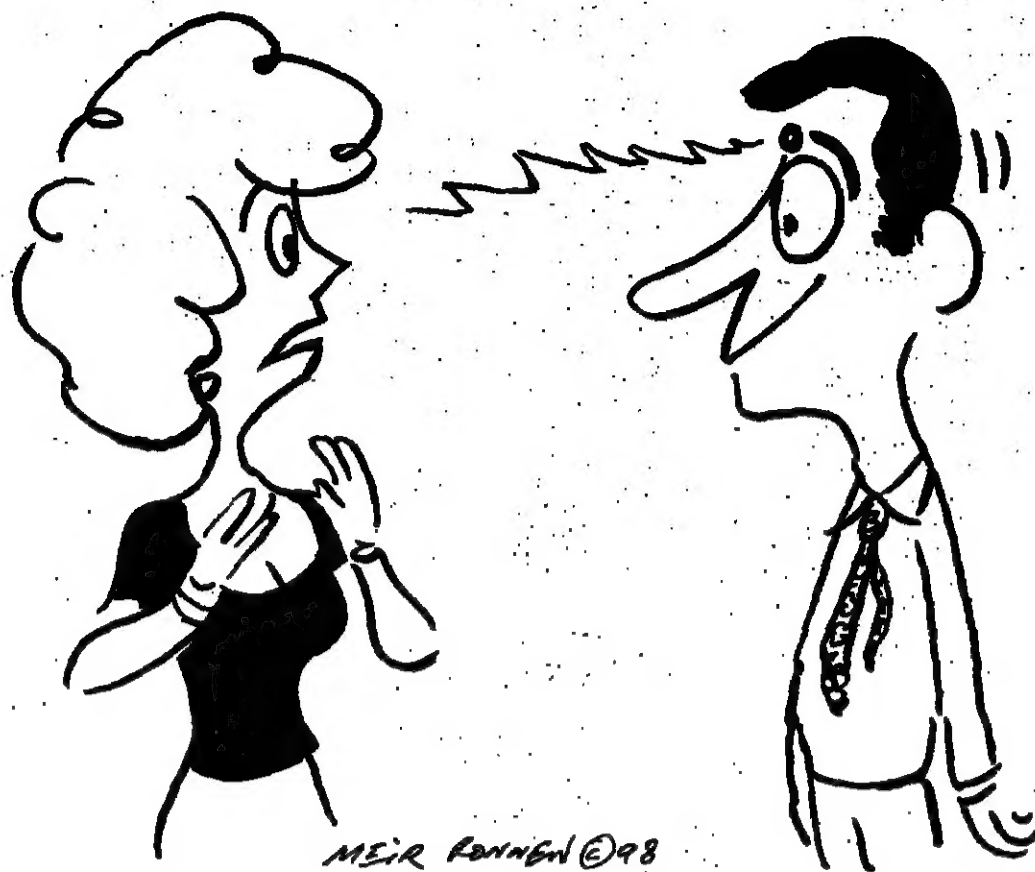
What you view as a flaw - whether it be flusteredness or flusteredness - should play a smaller role in your emotional deliberations than it is playing now, if you really intend to "settle down."

Placing more emphasis on how you feel about this woman than on how well she looks or cooks might serve not only to help you realize what's important; it might even inspire your girlfriend to take account of your irritation concerning her problem.

Letters should be addressed to: 'Dear Ruthie,' POB 81, Jerusalem 91000. For e-mail: ruthie@jpost.co.il ('Dear Ruthie' also appears in In Jerusalem and in City Lights on Fridays.)

'Cyborgs': Stunt or science?

The potential of the human-machine hybrid still exerts a powerful grip. Ashley Dunn reports



MEIR KENNEDY © 98

A little above his left elbow, Kevin Warwick bears a quarter-inch scar, the vestige of an experiment this year in which he had an electronic transmitter implanted just beneath his skin.

For eight days, Warwick wandered through a sensor-rich building at Britain's University of Reading, his movements tracked by a Big Brother-ish computer that would open doors for him, turn on his personal computer, check his e-mail and greet him with a cheery "Hello, Professor Warwick."

The experiment was actually more stunt than science, since the basic technology of implanted transmitters has been used for years to identify pets and farm animals. And high-tech trappings notwithstanding, Warwick could have achieved the same results in Reading's "smart" building by tapping the transmitter to his forehead.

But for Warwick, the point of the experiment was not strictly technological, but one of will and desire. "Can we do this? Do we want to do this?" he asked. "I wanted to take that step and push forward."

The thought of joining humans and machines has been one of those quirky constructions of science fiction that has been fascinating to the imagination yet largely repulsive and pointless in reality. But in recent decades, advances in microchip design, wireless communications and neural stimulation have breached the barrier separating humans from their powerful mechanical creations.

From implanted identification transponders to artificial ears that allow the deaf to hear, these devices have begun to surge into the marketplace, creating a potential multi-billion-dollar industry built on replacing lost abilities or enhancing those we have.

And like the first encounters with large factory machines 200 years ago, these implanted devices - even in their crude state - have begun to set off conflicts over their transforming power.

One prominent conflict is the battle over hearing implants, which have been decry by many deaf-advocacy organizations as a threat to their culture.

The complaints seem largely ignored in the enormous technological push to create and re-create pieces of the human body from silicon, plastic and stainless steel.

Gregory Stock, director of the University of California, Los Angeles's Program on Science, Technology and Society, said it has only been with the advent of computers - with their speed, precision, small size and personal nature - that the idea of joining humans and machines has become something other than grotesque.

"We are born into a sea of machines and telecommunications now," Stock said. "The boundaries have begun to break down as the interfaces become easier and more natural. It is evolutionary in a biological sense. But for society as a whole, it is a revolution."

The roots of the human-machine hybrid trace back to two researchers in the 1960s who were investigating the survivability of

humans in space for the National Aeronautics and Space Administration.

Manfred Clynes, then chief research scientist at New York's Rockland State Hospital, and Nathan Kline, the hospital's director, believed that humans could survive the rigors of radiation, low gravity, carbon dioxide buildup and a host of other conditions only if the body's mechanisms were radically changed.

They proposed the use of a host of drugs that would be administered automatically, allowing the astronauts the freedom "to explore, to create, to think and to feel." They coined the term "cyborg" to describe their hybrid creation - short for "cybernetic organism."

They published a picture of the first cyborg, a white laboratory rat with an osmotic pump attached to its tail. Clynes and Kline's idea soon dropped out of favor with NASA as the word was embraced by science-fiction writers, but the research into implantable devices continued. The development of the transistor cleared the way for the 1958 introduction of the first implanted electronic device - the cardiac pacemaker.

In the decades since, at least half a dozen companies have emerged that produce such devices - used to control pain, regulate breathing and activate paralyzed hands.

For all the ingenuity of these implants, they are still crude compared with the elegance of the human body, like pieces of Frankenstein dug up from some high-tech graveyard. Many of the devices must be activated by the user. For example, patients implanted with NeuroControl's FreeHand system typically shrug their shoulders to make a paralyzed hand grasp an object.

But research into automatic and natural control is moving quickly. This year, Drs. Roy Bakay and Philip Kennedy of Atlanta's Emory University announced the development of a brain implant that allows paralyzed patients to command a computer with their thoughts.

The implant, a tiny glass cone seeded with material that encourages nerve cells to grow inside, detects electrical activity in certain parts of the brain's motor cortex. The pattern of activity is then interpreted to control the movements of a computer cursor. The cursor can be placed on icons that activate the computer to speak and type messages.

ONE of the oldest and most successful of the devices that communicate with the nervous system is the cochlear implant, a device that can help the deaf by directly stimulating the auditory nerve. The implants fit inside the tiny spiral tube of the cochlea, deep

within the ear. The cochlea is usually lined with thousands of hair cells, which produce an electrical charge when they are moved by sound waves. Each section of the cochlea's tube relates to a different pitch. Cochlear implants bypass the hair cells and directly stimulate the nerves with their own electrical signal.

The first devices had only a single electrode, but since the mid-1990s, microprocessor-controlled implants with multiple electrodes have appeared, allowing for a fuller reproduction of sound.

(There is little debate over the use of cochlear implants in adults, particularly those who grew up as hearing people. For them, the implants only restore an ability that was lost. But many deaf organizations, including the World Federation of the Deaf, have rallied against using the devices in children who were born deaf. The problem is not so much the device itself, but the perception of the deaf that it engenders.)

Lawrence Fleischer, chairman of the deaf studies department at California State University, Northridge, in Los Angeles, said the implants bring with them a vision of deafness that the deaf themselves reject: that they are damaged humans who must be repaired by technology.

"The deaf community already has a language," Fleischer said. "It has its own beliefs and values. The medical field doesn't see it in the same light. They see an ear that needs to be fixed."

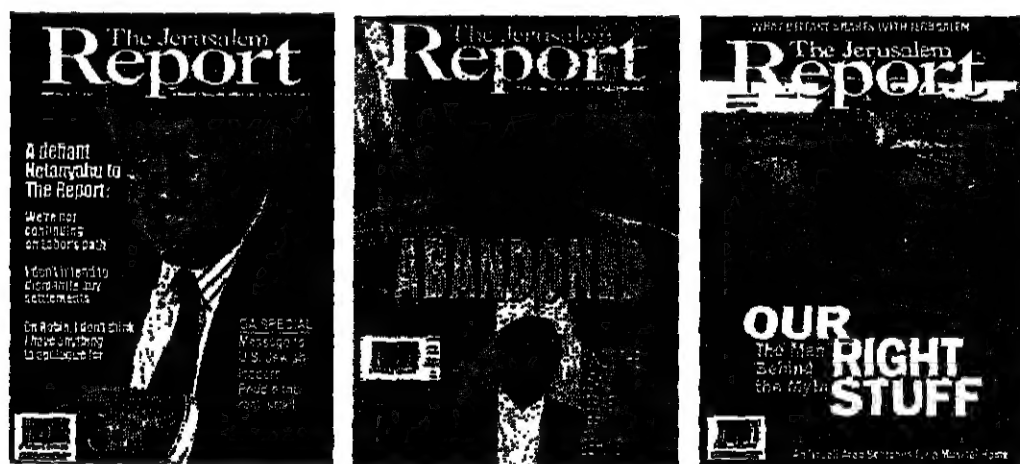
WHILE the argument may seem strained to those in the hearing world, it is a central belief of many in the deaf community that the inability to hear is not a loss but simply a difference, like skin color or height. The deaf movement against cochlear implants highlights a theme that has resurfaced with each advance in technology: that the machine enforces a slightly different sense of life, one that becomes more compelling and threatening as it penetrates deeper into human society.

Even Warwick's small experiment with an implanted transmitter drew a variety of responses from around the world, including some who likened the implant to the mark of the beast in the Bible. Reporters from Moscow and South Africa questioned him about the implant's potential use by a police state to control and identify its citizenry.

Warwick is more sanguine about the role of the device, saying it could be used to monitor criminals, confirm the identities of parties in a business transaction or help the disabled navigate through a smart building.

The use or abuse of technology is in the hands of its human users, he said. "I didn't really feel any negatives; even though people knew where I was all the time, I didn't really feel anything except that the implant was removed, I began to feel I was going to miss it." (Los Angeles Times)

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Finding more of myself

Amy Argetsinger thought she was unique. A routine Internet search proved otherwise

For years now, I've known deep in my heart that she was probably out there somewhere. But it was only lately that I had to confront the unavoidable truth of her existence.

You could think of her, I suppose, as the Other Woman. More specifically, she is the other Amy Argetsinger.

She lives. Her name is my name. I found her, not surprisingly, on the Internet. And I'm not exaggerating when I say that this discovery has shaken me to my core.

Many of you won't understand. How could you, with your garden-variety surnames? But for me, like most of my Argetsinger relatives, the utter uniqueness of my name has been one of the truisms of my life.

There aren't many Argetsingers, you see. The name itself is a relatively recent invention, a New World mutation of an Old Country moniker. It has been for me an icebreaker, a conversation-starter, a way to stand out in the crowd.

Old acquaintances spot it easily if they stumble upon it somewhere, then track me down and greet me with a phrase that secretly delights me: "I figured it was probably the same Amy Argetsinger!"

They can no longer make such assumptions.

In truth, I've been closing in on her for years. For, while we revealed in our specialness, we Argetsingers have long wondered about the Others. We mulled reports of Argetsingers in Alaska, the Argetsinger a friend met in a Wichita doctor's waiting room, the Argetsinger name on a dry-goods store an acquaintance once drove past in northern Wisconsin.

When I traveled, I adopted my father's habit of looking for Argetsinger in the phone books of every town along the way - never calling, just staring at the word out of context in Michigan City or Flagstaff or New Orleans.

But just a few years ago, technological advances rendered these sorts of haphazard checks obsolete.

My local library got a CD-ROM listing of millions of names and addresses culled from white pages nationwide. I typed in my surname and saw immediately that there were actually scores of Argetsingers - a vein through southern Minnesota, a concentric circle of them in the small towns outside Des Moines, scatterings in Oregon and South Carolina, and more than I had ever imagined in our home turf of western New York state.

There were no Amys recorded, but who knew how many legions of unlisted children were hidden in these people's homes?

By the time the Internet became available, I was inured to the oceans of Argetsingers. Instead, I indulged in an irresistible vanity search - plugging my full name into a search engine to see where I popped up.

As The Washington Post ventured on-line and its staff writers' bylined stories were posted, my trails appeared everywhere. That novelty soon wore off, too.

SO, really, it's not like I was desperate to see my name again that day when I found her. I just was looking for the electronic home of a nonprofit group whose Web site I knew had referenced one of my articles, and figured that searching

for my name would be the quickest way.

And there she was, on the "1998 Show-Me Showdown" Web page: A high school freshman basketball standout from St. Louis, tearing up the place at the Missouri state championships.

"Amy Argetsinger shoots through a sea of green shirts," "Amy Argetsinger shoots for two," "Megan McGill and Amy Argetsinger apply the trap." I cringed.

"No!" I wanted to yell. "That never happened! I don't even know how to apply the 'trap'!" It was strangely disconcerting to see my name - my self - represented in this alien context. There were the photos, too-small, indistinct ones that nonetheless gave me the image of a lanky, dark-haired girl.

There she is. The Other. The vanquisher of my pathetic source of mystique.

Yet, somehow, I couldn't resent her, this stranger who seemingly exists much as I did half my life ago, in the cocoon of a decent private school in the leafy American suburbs.

Soon, however, she will be out in the world, and it is not inconceivable that our circles of acquaintances will approach a tangent, and our six degrees of separation will collapse into three, or even two. Maybe we will meet, accidentally, at a conference or on a plane or at a party.

And then I can tell her how I had sought and found and tracked her all these years.

"I figured," I'll finally say, "that it had to be the same Amy Argetsinger."

(The Washington Post)

Roses bloom among pop thorns



By David Brian

No particular theme stood out in pop music this year. Spurred by the panicking music industry's realization that the salad days of big profits are over, more and more artists played it safe, dove deeper into their comfortable niches and tried to weather the storm.

Fan loyalty to their faves continued to be a quaint concept of the past, as MTV churned out a non-stop factory of instant hits, only to discover a month later that they belonged in the Where Are They Now department.

Accessible teen-oriented hip hop and rap firmly entrenched themselves in the Top 40 alongside veteran genres like dance-based R&B, Celine Dion ballads, pop goes the country, and never-say-die metal. But for more discerning tastes, some visionary artists were still able to surface amid the hazy music-as-marketing-tool fog.

Here's a look at some of the music that kept returning to my proverbial turntable throughout the year.

DISCS THAT WILL ENDURE

Celebrity Skin

COURTESY LOVE
Exhilarating radio-friendly rock with a healthy punk attitude. Courtney Love said she wanted to make an album that would be remembered as affectionately as the '70s landmarks *Rumours* and *The Wall*. And thanks to her concise grasp of rock history, not to mention Eric Erlandson's magnificent guitar propulsion, she's done it.

Tracks

BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN
Springsteen's bag of rejects, demos, B-sides and experiments is better than almost anybody else's final cuts. Helps remind us why he was once the future of rock 'n' roll.

The Globe Sessions

SHERYL CROW
Michael Jackson's former back-up singer has blossomed into an ambitious and bold artist. Luckily, she hasn't lost any of her rootsy, rockin' charm along the way.

Elliot Smith

Creating orchestral symphonies on an acoustic guitar, Smith is one of the most distinctive singer-songwriters to emerge since Randy Newman and Tom Waits. And his voice is sweeter.

Up

R.E.M.
R.E.M. reinvents itself so convincingly that, for a change, it almost sounds like R.E.M. Imagine if it was somebody more important than the drummer who left.

Ray of Light

MADONNA
I can already hear the hoots, but the divine Miss M reaps the benefits of motherhood by creating her most sophisticated, yet earthy, body of work.

Mermaid Avenue

BILLY BRAGG AND WILCO
The spirit of Woody Guthrie brought back from the Dustbowl. Sympathetic folk, rock and country defines the times.

Adore

SMASHING PUMPKINS
Exchanging '90s arena rock for a haunting, dreamy landscape, Billy Corgan and band mature gracefully without totally putting their childhood games away.

Yield

PEARL JAM
Ignoring all the extraneous trappings of stardom, Seattle's finest circles the wagons, gets down to basics and blows away the competition that arose in the interim.

Desireless

EAGLE EYE CHERRY
Full of desire, the son of trumpeteer Don Cherry proves his mettle with a debut batch of driving folk-tinged rock.

DEBUTANTS

The Way

FASTBALL
1998's catchiest rock song on the radio, "The Way" is but the tip of the iceberg for these Austin, Texas, power poppers.

Marcy Playground

Quirky, charming rock, personalized by free-thinking frontman John Wozniak.

Lovers Knot

JEB LOY NICHOLS
Seasoned singer-songwriter brings twang touches to his laconic folk, country and blues.

Chuppabra

IMANI COPPOLA
A joyous pastiche of rhythmic raps and Joni Mitchell melodies.

BEST REISSUE

Bob Dylan Live 1966
BOB DYLAN
OK, this has only previously been "issued" as a bootleg so it's not really a reissue, but if you



Bob Dylan crowned with (left to right) Sheryl Crow, John Lennon, and Madonna.

were a Dylan fan, you owned it despite the crackles and hiss. And this cleaned up version demonstrates why.

BEST COUNTRY DISC

Crown of Jewels

RANDY SCRUGGS
Forget about generic Garth and Shania designer-jeans clones. *Crown of Jewels* cuts through the pop-country straight to the pure, raw, brook with a little help from a slew of legends.

BEST HIP-HOP DISC

Mezzanine

MASSIVE ATTACK
Headphone music personified - proof that trip hop is the bastard son of '60s psychedelia.

BEST COMPILATIONS

Soul Classics

VARIOUS ARTISTS
Spotlight on James Brown! It's sweet soul music for at least half of this ambitious, locally produced double disc. Thankfully light on the overused *Big Chill* co-opted hits.

Lennon Anthology

JOHN LENNON
Just like he was in life, the *Lennon Anthology* can be overbearing. But through the sheer bulk of material, the essence of Lennon's magical presence shines on and on.

ROCKING CHAIR AWARD

Vertical Man

RINGO STARR
Because we expected the least,

he delivers the most.

Imagination

BRIAN WILSON
All those years of therapy, and he winds up making a Chicago sound-alike.

When We Were the New Boys

ROD STEWART
Stewart finally admits there was some good music made after 1978, and proceeds to steal it.

Promonition

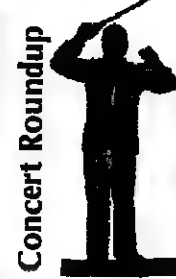
JOHN FOGERTY
Blasting live versions of Creedence classics. Required history lesson for all teens.

Walking Into Clarkdale

JIMMY PAGE
& **ROBERT PLANT**

Bluesy, energetic and hard rocking, that was some deal with the devil that these two made to stave off the hands of time.

Happy birthday to a pianist



Concert Roundup

Schiff's technique is perfect.

Andras Schiff, piano
Clairmont Hall,
Tel Aviv University,
December 22

and his performance is well thought out, but you sometimes feel that this introverted pianist only hints at the treasures of the musical opuses he plays. His Bach (Prelude and Fugue in A minor, BWV 894) was dryish and his Beethoven (Sonata No. 4 in E flat major, Op. 7) was lacking vivacity, yet in *Games and Plays* by Gyorgy Kurtag he demonstrated his teacher's ability to "say a lot with a few notes."

The real highlight of the concert came after intermission when this reserved musician let himself go with a topping rendition of Schumann's *Nachtsstücke*, Op. 23/1-4, and *Grande Sonata* No. 3 in F minor.

In a moving finale, the head of the Tel Aviv Academy, Noam Sheriff, led the public in singing "Happy Birthday" to the Hungarian pianist.

Maxim Reider

Liturgia

ISO Kartauskantorei Kito Choir
Works by Schubert and Fauré
Jerusalem Theater
December 22

Fauré's *Requiem*, a sensitive and introverted liturgical work, was offered in a JSO program that included Schubert's Mass No. 6, conducted by Peter

Neumann. Neumann's Kartauskantorei choir captured Fauré's subtleties in an uncommonly touching manner. The superbly trained voices were forceful without sharpness in "Liberate me," and caressingly soft in choruses such as the concluding beatific "In paradisum." The orchestra's instrumental solos were also rendered with appropriate care.

Schubert's more dramatic and extroverted Mass was performed with a well-rounded sound, yet with a degree of pomposity that came at the expense of the work's potential energies.

The soloists were the weak link. They lacked presence and luster, sounding as though they were further away than the distance between stage and audience.

Ury Eppstein

Carmina Burana

Sospiri Vocal Quartet, Modus
Vivendi Instrumental Ensemble
YMCA Auditorium
December 20

It's hard to imagine anything more secular than this 13th-century *Carmina Burana*, subtitled "Songs of Love and Life." Drinking songs and songs of sin, lust and avarice make the so-called "dark ages" appear bright, lovely and occasionally naughty. One of the many gems celebrates the liberation of Jerusalem from the Saracens by the Christians in 1099.

The UK Sospiri quartet led by Jenny Hansell revived the period's joie de vivre and freshness, bringing the old songs close to the present-day audience.

The voices were well-trained and pleasant, and the renditions were faithful to the supposedly authentic style. Haifa's Modus Vivendi, featuring period instruments, such as the krumphorn, the oud and recorders, contributed the appropriate instrumental coloring to the vocal presentation.

Ury Eppstein

Tadmor gets personal

DANCE REVIEW

by ORA SHAFAN

Neta

Sinuous Duet
December 25

After creating three full-length works, Ido Tadmor has assembled a modest production of several solo works, guest appearances by friends and video segments of himself, his Mom and a coffee reader he befriended.

Neta affirms what a remarkable dancer Tadmor is, but leaves open questions about his artistic judgment. Using the dance to announce his love for his mother (Neta) and to deal with his homosexuality, Tadmor's chore-

ography at times seemed to lapse into an embarrassingly sentimental journey.

The decision to name the work after his mother was touching, but the video duet he dances with her was overly intimate. The fact that Neta Tadmor (63) is not a dancer made the choice even more debatable.

Tadmor also uses the work to ridicule some prominent talk-show hosts for making his sexual inclination a big issue - while he, himself, does the same.

The dance-biography stands firm without those declarations; the solos, duets and trio sequences contain enough power and depth.

Tadmor's dancing is unique - exposing his vulnerability, sensitivity, yearning and compassion and driving him to explore the outer edges of emotion.



Ido Tadmor

Pathos always pays off

Theater Roundup



By Naomi Doudai

Oded Kottler's revival of one of Levin's most poignant one-act plays is indeed a celebration of the Hebrew play - and playwright - par excellence. Levin here is, as ever, the poet of failure, of existential frustration, the blunt

The Labor of Living

(Melechet Hachaim)
by Hanoch Levin
Beit Lessia Theater, Tel Aviv
December 21

exponent of banality and irreversible mediocrity.

A paean to the pangs of underdogs, the *kleine menschele* of the Tel Aviv street scene, his hero is Yona Popoch, a worm that turns after 30 years of groveling in the boredom, stagnation and monotony of a meaningless marriage.

Yossi Banai in the role of Popoch is a worthy successor to the late lamented Nissim Azikri, who, together with Lia Koenig, made the original Habimah production so powerful.

In contrast to the quiet pathos and subtle gradation of Azikri's presentation, Banai's immediately works up an explosion of righteous wrath. The grotesque tempo never lets up until the climax, when it subsides in a lyrical and quietly pathetic collapse.

Yet, for all the outward bluster of his performance, all through, Banai speaks most touchingly and eloquently with his eyes.

In Tikki Dayan's vivacious interpretation, Leviva Popoch, long-suffering wife to Banai's misanthropic spouse (among the rest he calls her a cow), is a warm Mother Earth who crushes his fear of death with her life-loving instinct and basic humanity.



Yossi Banai and Tikki Dayan don't enjoy their marriage.

The introduction of some singing numbers is, as far as I can recall, an innovation. Banai is, of course, a past master of one-man vocal declamation. Dayan manages credibly, too.

But though the lyrical touch is not out of place, it is too slight and sporadic to work here other than as an extraneous element.

Uri Muri

by Itzhak Ben-Ner
Cameri Theater
December 2

Uri Muri by Itzhak Ben-Ner at the Cameri is ostensibly a love story, about the forbidden love of an Ethiopian child, Muri, for her adoptive father, Uri. But black and white, spring and winter polarities aside, it is a drama that delves into the sociocultural divide that yawns between two segments of Israeli society. Bigotry amounting to

racism in a problematic sabra family, whose members all seem to hate each other, makes the 11-year-old Muri's absorption into local life a nightmare. To compensate she develops an obsessive love for the tolerant Uri who, as the play opens, is 54 to her 24.

A writer's play with a richly wrought text, it proceeds through a series of phone calls and time shifts that make for some confusion. Fortunately, Rami Danon's original staging absorbs some of these drawbacks.

But it is the developing relationship graphically played by Ilan Dar (Uri) and Mehereta Baruch (Muri) that makes for an immensely gripping production. The latter, with her arresting beauty, lends a rich visual dimension to the drama. This especially in the scenes where she emerges in Ofra Confino's exquisitely designed ethnic costumes.

Pretty Butterfly

OPERA REVIEW

by MOON REIDER

Madama Butterfly
Tel Aviv Performing Arts Center
December 24

The staging of classic opera requires invention. On the face of it, director Christopher Alden seems to be such a harmless revolutionary.

In his *La Traviata*, the characters rode around the stage on gorgeous beds, and here, in *Madama Butterfly*, the story turns into a giddy naval officer's recollections, with Butterfly and Kate Pinkerton roaming about like two shades of Hamlet's Father.

The problem is that Alden's direction has little - if anything - to do with the score. This is a sad, sincere and realistic story, told by the sweeping music.

Cho-cho-san loves Pinkerton, while he believes that he can play with a human being like a doll. This view is the opposite of Alden's German silent-movie style where the heroes wring their hands in despair and then collapse on the floor in the most picturesque way.

All this could be forgiven if the production was musically perfect, which is not exactly the case here.

Granted, Russian soprano Natalia Dercho, in the lead, emerges as a fine singing actress with a deep understanding of Puccini's music, revealing swift changes of her heroine's mood, from bliss to hope to almost despair.

The warm Chinese mezzo, Ning Liang, is a dramatic Suzuki, unable to help her young mistress, while the powerful British baritone, Keith Latham, finds the right tone for Sharpless, by chance involved into a not-so-nice affair whose tragic showdown he foresees.

One can hardly explain why Cho-cho-san is so infatuated with the unimpressive Pinkerton (the Mexican tenor Rafael Rojas), but the rest of the cast in minor roles deliver solid, if not always vivid, performances.

Emotional and lyrical Puccini, who in a way was a forerunner of larger-than-life Hollywood music, demands incredible tact and infallible taste from a conductor. Unfortunately, under the awkward baton of French conductor Emmanuel Joel, the Rishon LeZion Symphony in the pit sounds in turn schmalzy and bombastic, never catching the elusive mood of this touching masterpiece.

On the plus side, the sets (Paul Steinberg) are really beautiful if somewhat static, the costumes (Buki Shiff) are stylish, and Avi-Yona Bueno (Bambi) proves once more that he is one of this country's best lighting designers.

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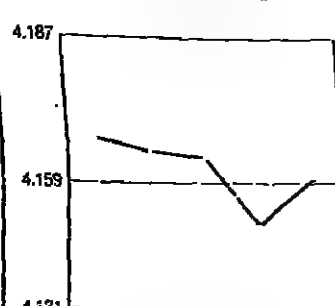
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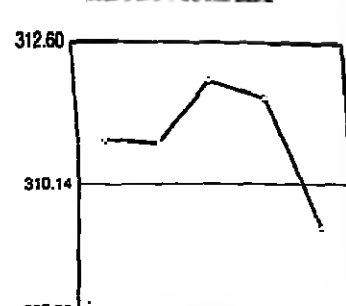
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in brief

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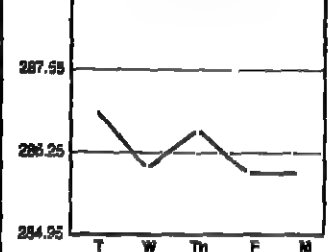


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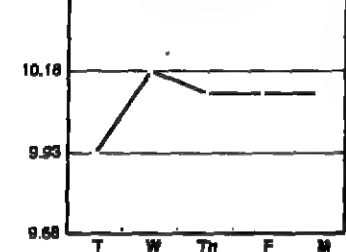
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OIL

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Levi increases stake in Africa Israel

Businessman Levi announced yesterday that he has exercised an option to increase his stake in holding company Africa Israel Investments by buying a five percent stake for NIS 76 million. Levi was granted the put-option to Bank Leumi when he bought Africa Israel's controlling share. Israel's second-largest bank, which still holds 20% of Africa Israel, can sell the remaining shares before the end of 1999 based on a company value of \$340m. The option was given to Bank Leumi in 1996 as part of a deal in which Levi acquired some 55% of the company for \$189m. Following yesterday's transaction, Levi owns 51.6% of the company. Dan Gerstenfeld

Technomatix acquires German firm for \$9m.

Herzliya-based Technomatix Technologies yesterday announced the acquisition of Ansim Simulationssysteme for \$9m. in cash. The shares of Munich-based Ansim were purchased from six private shareholders.

The company, which develops tools for manufacturing applications, employs 22 people and expects revenues of \$3m. for 1998. Technomatix, which develops software tools, said in a statement that the deal fits its strategy of expanding into new industries and broadening its product offerings. Dan Gerstenfeld

More immigrants opening small businesses

An increase of some 90 percent was recorded in the number of small businesses opened by new immigrants between July and December, the Absorption Ministry announced yesterday.

A total of 580 such businesses were opened during this period, compared to 310 between January and June. The yearly total was an increase over the 750 businesses established in 1997.

The increase in the second half of '98 was due to ministry efforts to obtain increased loans from the Treasury and an extension of the period of eligibility. Aryeh Dean Cohen

Iran, Saudi Arabia to establish shipping link

Iran and Saudi Arabia will establish their first direct shipping links within two weeks, the Iranian Commerce Ministry said last week. Ships will ply the Gulf waters between the eastern Saudi port of Dammam and the southern Iranian port of Bandar Abbas, a ministry spokesman said.

In addition, the two states will shortly allow planes to fly between the eastern Saudi city of Dhahran and the northeastern Iranian city of Mashhad, as well as between Riyadh, and the southern Iranian city of Shiraz, the spokesman said, speaking on condition of anonymity. AP

Millennium bug to cost banks \$100m.

By DAN GERSTENFELD

The banking sector will have to set aside \$100 million in order to deal with problems related to the millennium bug, Israel Discount Bank executive vice president Menahem Gutterman told *The Jerusalem Post* this week.

The millennium bug is a computer software fault that could cause computers and the devices they operate to stop working or give incorrect data starting January 1, 2000.

Analysts predicted even higher sums would be needed to solve the problem. Meta Group CEO Jimmy Schwarzkopf estimated that the banks will have to spend up to \$200m.

Despite the massive investment there is no guarantee that all the problems will be solved, according to Gutterman.

"We are doing all we can to deal with the problem, but only on January 1 will we know where the real problems are," he said. "It is impossible to predict where a problem might arise."

Figures published by Israel's five largest

banks in their 1997 annual reports show that there are big differences in the amount each of them intends to invest in treating the millennium bug.

While Bank Leumi, the country's second-largest bank, intends to invest some \$58m. over three years, the First International Bank says it is earmarking a mere NIS 12m. for this purpose.

In its earnings reports, FIBI stated that it is well aware of the fact that it has budgeted considerably less than the other banks, but that its expenses will be lower because a large part of the work is being done by the bank's in-house technicians. The difference in investment is also an outcome of the fact that the computer systems of Leumi are older than those of FIBI.

Bank Hapoalim, the country's largest bank, said it will spend some \$25m. while Bank Discount and United Mizrahi Bank intend to spend \$10m. and NIS 17.5m. respectively.

Industry sources said that the big difference between the amounts spent by the various banks reflects the fact that some of the

banks may be using the opportunity to upgrade their computer systems. In addition, banks such as FIBI may not include all their expenses under the provision for the millennium problem.

The supervisor of banks at the Bank of Israel requires banks to outline in their earnings reports their plans for solving the problem and the costs arising from doing so.

In November, US Federal Reserve Board member Roger Ferguson, who chairs the American Year 2000 Council, said that spending on the millennium bug could trim a tenth of a percentage point from America's gross domestic product in 1999 and in 2000.

The 35 largest US banks plan to spend at least \$3.92 billion to treat the bug. Banks such as Chase Manhattan Corp., J.P. Morgan & Co. and Bankers Trust already have announced that they will have to spend as much as 20% more than what they originally expected.

The largest investment so far is being made by Citicorp, the third-largest US

bank, which said it expects total costs to be \$650m. over three years. BankAmerica Corp., the biggest US bank, expects to spend about \$550m.

Schwarzkopf said that the amount invested by Israeli banks is similar to that invested by overseas banks of the same size. Leumi's preparations are considered among the most advanced, even when compared to international institutions.

Gutterman, who is in charge of the computer systems at Discount, said his company intends to offer clients more services through the Internet.

Discount on Sunday unveiled its upgraded Internet software which allows clients to receive information on their bank accounts through the Internet. IDB CEO David Granot said that currently the majority of banking services given through the Internet is limited mainly to stocks trading.

Granot estimates that the Bank of Israel will ultimately allow banks to offer more services through the Internet. He added, however, that cyber-banking is not expected to replace the current banking system.

Levin panel: Price stability is bank's supreme task

Central bank leaves interest rates unchanged

By DAVID ZEV HARRIS and JESSICA STEINBERG

The Levin Committee, established by the government to review the Bank of Israel's structure and mandate, yesterday submitted its report, proposing price stability be made the bank's supreme task, and that a five-person council be established to handle the execution of monetary policy.

The main recommendations include:

- Ensuring price stability while focusing on financial stability. At the same time, the bank should aim to improve the country's economic growth and reduce unemployment.
- Maintaining the bank's independence and ability to choose the right monetary tools.
- Establishing a five-member monetary committee including the governor, a deputy governor, and three independent specialists in monetary, fiscal and macroeconomic policy - each to be appointed for a five-year term.

This panel would replace the existing internal bank committee which handles interest rate decisions. Minutes from the council's meetings will be published within six weeks of each session.

- Abolishing the governor's role as economic advisor to the government.
- Turning the Bank of Israel Law (1954) into a basic law. This will make it more difficult to change the law in the future.

"We looked for a law that is fitting for today, one that is modern, one that stands in the framework of the country," said committee chairman Dov Levin.



Levin Committee chairman Dov Levin (right) hands a report concerning its proposal for the Bank of Israel Law to Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu (center). Bank of Israel Governor Jacob Frenkel looks on. (GPO)

Bank of Israel Governor Jacob Frenkel said the report bears no impact on him personally, since his second term in office is already more than half-way through. What is important, he said, is the report's long-term impact on the bank's stature.

The committee members emphasized that the creation of a monetary team would enhance the bank's independence, freeing it from political and business pressures.

Committee member and former Bank of Israel governor Amnon Gafni added that personal respon-

sibility would lie among all five members, "individually and together."

Given the current political limbo, the delayed budget, and yesterday's tie on the budgetary arrangements bill, the committee members said they would prefer action on the report be postponed until after the upcoming general election.

The report was published two weeks after the Knesset Finance Committee gave initial approval to Labor MK Avraham Shohat's alternative private member bill establishing a board of governors.

Levin committee member and

Tel Aviv University Professor Haim Ben-Shahar said he was personally offended by the bill, calling it a "disgrace."

"They knew very well that we were about to publish [the report] but had their own political agenda," he said at the press conference.

The Treasury and the central bank both welcomed the report, saying that it could only benefit the bank and the economy.

The bank praised the establishment of a council, commenting that it shouldn't be seen as a failure for Governor Frenkel, but "some-

thing [is] badly needed for the sake of the economy."

Treasury Director-General Ben-Zion Zilberfarb said the report strengthens the independence of the bank, adding that it's important to publish the monetary decisions and rationale.

Meanwhile, the bank yesterday left the key interest rate unchanged at 13.5 percent.

Senior sources at the bank cited a desire to maintain price stability amid an economy living in the shadows of political uncertainty, as the backdrop to the decision to keep rates at a 17-month high.

All set for marathon weekend

LONDON (Reuters) - The dress rehearsals are over and the minutes are ticking down to the big show - the launch of Europe's new common currency, the euro, this New Year's holiday weekend.

Thousands of financial staff across Europe will be working flat out during "Euro Big Bang" weekend, converting the prices of European shares and bonds into euros and reprogramming computers to cope with the switchover.

"From a financial standpoint, this start of a new currency is the biggest single event we will have seen in our lifetime," said Paul Cantwell, a partner at Andersen Consulting. "It's like watching the Berlin Wall coming down."

For months, financial employees throughout Europe have been sacrificing weekends to do mock runs for the conversion marathon from December 31 to January 3.

The starting gun will be fired on New Year's Eve, when finance ministers fix the rate at which the euro will trade.

Staff will then be racing against the clock to translate the value of securities from the 11 countries in the euro zone into the new currency in time for when markets open on January 4. That's when brokers will have to be ready to deal in euros.

"This is a massive logistical exercise. Nothing has ever been attempted on this scale," said Roger Bates, who is coordinating the conversion for Deutsche Bank in London.

London, Europe's biggest trading center for currencies and foreign shares, will be at the heart of the action, even though Britain is not expected to join the euro until at least 2002. Up to 30,000 employees will be working in the City, London's financial district, a 10th of the normal workforce.

The stakes involved in ensuring the transition goes smoothly are huge. Problems making the changeover to the euro could cost financial institutions clients and

EURO LAUNCH

By PENNY MACRAE

money.

The switchover requires military-style planning. Many institutions have set up "war rooms" and "command posts" to coordinate their activities over the long weekend. Flow charts line walls and mobile phones proliferate.

"In a way, we're looking forward to it," says Joanna Meager, senior vice president at Salomon Smith Barney. "We've done all the revision. Now we want to do it for real. The adrenaline will be pumping."

Staff will be able to snatch a few hours' sleep in nearby hotel rooms booked months in advance; cappuccino trolleys will ply hallways to keep the bleary-eyed awake; and caterers will bring in plenty of food.

"You'd be surprised how many people have opinions on sandwich fillings," Meager joked.

In fact, staff at one brokerage house grumbled about being served ready-made dinners during the trial runs and won assurances that their new cafeteria would be up and running during the big weekend to serve gourmet meals.

The nearest equivalent to conversion weekend, market watchers say, was the dramatic 1986 deregulation of the London Stock Exchange, which was also known as the Big Bang.

Then there was trouble when computers seized up and thousands of trades were unsettled months afterward.

"There was a logjam of paper and some back offices effectively glued up," said Andersen Consulting's Cantwell.

While the big institutions say they are ready, they say they are not sure everyone else is - especially the smaller players - and that is what could cause things to snarl.

"It's like a grand opera but everybody has been practicing in a different room and there is no conductor," said Cantwell. "Nobody knows how it will be when they have to sing together."

In addition to dealing with the conversion, there will be the normal year-end housekeeping in which a whole 12 months worth of accounts will have to be finalized.

One of the first signs of things going wrong will be if one bank's calculations fail to tally with those of a trading partner's. Staff on both sides will have to scramble to find out the root of the price discrepancies.

Differences in simple rounding of figures could produce confusion.

"You could see companies having trouble in translating from the old currencies into new," said Cantwell. "They also have to convert all their price histories. There may be some people who won't be able to finish in time."

Central bankers have made emergency plans in the event of any massive payment problems or computer systems breakdowns. But most financial institutions have scaled down the amount of business they transact to make the conversion process easier.

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NOTICE TO THE PUBLIC

for a special offer of buying units without a

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In continuation of the special offer, valid until December 31, 1998, starting from January 1, 1999 to February 28, 1999, the units of "Lahak Kosmos" will be offered at a unit price without a supplemental rate.

Orders for buying units can be given through all branches of Israel-American Bank, Bank Hapoalim B.M. or through members of the Tel Aviv Stock Exchange.

This notice is not a suggestion nor a recommendation to buy these units. The purchase of units in this fund is subject to the funds' latest prospectus.

The Fund Manager:
Lahak Mutual Funds (Poalim-American Israel) Ltd.

ISRAEL ELECTRIC

TENDERS

The Israel Electric Corporation wishes to make the following changes to Tender No. 2810

SUBJECT: SALE OF USED TRACK TYPE TRACTOR - CATERPILLAR D10N - 1988

CHANGES INCLUDE CHANGE IN THE DATE OF THE TOUR AND CHANGE IN LAST DATE FOR SUBMISSION

There will be a guided tour at the storehouse of the "Meor David" Power Station in Hadera on the following days:

Monday, January 18, 1999 at 10 a.m. Monday, January 25, 1999 at 10 a.m.

Those interested in participating in the tour should contact Mr. B. Binyamin, Sales Department, Tel. 03-565-4679/685 or fax 03-565-4644 in advance to arrange with the security officers to receive permission to enter the site.

Preliminary conditions: Deposit of a bank check in favor of the Electric Corporation in the sum of 10 percent of the estimated value of the bid.

Last date for submission of bids for the above tender: February 21, 1999 at 11 a.m.

THE ELECTRIC CORPORATION WISHES TO PURCHASE THE FOLLOWING GOODS:

Tender No. 699914 - BIDS FOR OUTDOOR TRANSFORMER STATION HOUSING (KIOSK) 630KVA 24 KV

Stage one - Submission of technical and commercial information without prices. Quantity: 120 units

Minimum conditions: As detailed in the tender.

Period of agreement: Two years.

Last date for submission of bids for the above tender: January 24, 1999 at 11 a.m.

Minimum Participation Conditions:

A. Participation in the tender is also subject to complying with the preliminary conditions detailed in the Tender Regulations 1993, Part 6(a) 1, 2, 3 (i.e. registration as required by law, compliance with mandatory specifications, and the holding of the permits required by law for transactions with public bodies).

B. The Israel Electric Corporation reserves the right to allow a bidder who has not provided some required relevant documents, permits, licenses, etc. to submit them within a time that will be set by the Corporation.

The tender documents may be obtained Sunday - Thursday, at the Market Research and Tenders Department, 11 Sderot Pal-Yam, Haifa, between 9 a.m. and 12 noon, on submission of a receipt, demonstrating payment for the documents (non-refundable) into the Corporation's account at the Postal Bank. Payment slips for making such payments are obtainable at the above address by calling 04-868-74534.

Before purchasing the tender documents, potential bidders may peruse them, Sunday-Thursday, 9 a.m.-12 noon, at the above offices or at the Sales Department, 90 Rehov Yigal Alon, Tel Aviv, Ashdod Building, entrance C, 1st floor, Tel. 03-565-4679, 03-565-4641. (An appointment to peruse the documents must be made beforehand, with the Sales Department.)

Bids should be submitted in a sealed envelope and be placed in Tender Box No. 1 in the Pal-Yam Building, Haifa (address as above) not later than 11 a.m. on the last date for submitting bids, as stated above.

NOTE: The envelopes cannot be submitted at the Tel Aviv offices of the Corporation. Any submitted in Tel Aviv will be disqualified.

No undertaking is given to accept the lowest or highest bid or any other.

NOTE: In appropriate cases, the Electric Corporation will give preference to suppliers, in accordance with the Tender Regulations (Preference for Locally Produced Goods, and Obligation to Extend Commercial Cooperation).

The Electric Corporation reserves the right to negotiate, where this is legally permissible.

The tenders can be seen at the Electric Corporation's website: www.israel-electric.co.il

תחומים על שירות 24 שעות

Building Blocks

By Jessica Steinberg

Jerusalem (commercial)
Tel Aviv-based Natam Real Estate (www.natam.co.il) recently surveyed the office market in Jerusalem, looking at 40 completed and under-construction office buildings in the industrial zones of Givat Shaul, Har Hotzvim, Talpott and Malha.

The survey concludes that over 95 percent of the existing buildings are full and 81 percent of the buildings are completed or being completed. The average rent ranges from \$11.50 per square meter in Talpott to \$16 per sq. m. in Malha.

Demand, however, has been driven largely by the government, and only then by high-tech, said Natam vice president Adina Cooper, who noted that most of Givat Shaul is rented out to government offices.

She also added that internal company expansion has also been more prevalent than new companies renting space.

"We're seeing decline in demand and slowness in the market," Cooper said. "We're not that optimistic about an increase in demand over the next 12 to 18 months."

Jerusalem (residential)
RE/MAX Professionals is recommending 150-sq.m. cottages and penthouses at a new Malha project, starting at \$393,000.

Ma'aleh Adumim (ma'aleh)
The continuing Israeli love affair with malls (canyon) has spread to Ma'aleh Adumim, where the 26,000-sq.m. Canyon Adumim will contain 10,000 sq.m. of commercial space, about 85 businesses and stores, and parking for 600 cars.

The mall is scheduled to open in the spring and will target Ma'aleh Adumim's 35,000 residents, as well as residents of northern Jerusalem.

Ma'aleh Adumim (residential)
In Ma'aleh Adumim, a 188-sq.m. duplex apartment with six rooms was sold for \$315,000. Part of the progress A.G.L. project, the apartment's original asking price was \$320,000.

Land on the Web
There is a sale at the Israel Land Administration's updated website (www.mmi.gov.il).

The site, which is updated monthly, offers information on residential, industrial, commercial and tourist plots for sale throughout the country.

There are also detailed maps available, as well as Land Authority decisions regarding agricultural properties.

For an Israeli real estate directory, surf over to www.internat.com - which offers comprehensive lists of brokers, builders, mortgage banks, maps and detailed descriptions of homes, prices and places.

Tel Aviv (residential)
On Rehov David Yellin, a three-room, 80-sq.m. apartment on the second floor of a 40-year-old building was sold for \$273,000. The apartment is located in a quiet corner of Kikar Hamedina, and needs renovations.

Center (residential)
In Ramat Hasharon, on Rehov Shmuel Hanagid, a four-room apartment was sold for \$208,000. The 100-sq.m. apartment was originally priced at \$215,000.

Also in Ramat Hasharon, in Savoyon Hasharon, a centrally air-conditioned, four-room apartment with a 120-meter sun porch, was sold for \$392,000.

In Kfar Sava, on Rehov Sheshet Hayarnim, a five-room apartment was sold for \$230,000. The 165-sq.m. apartment includes a sunny porch and sunken kitchen.

In Petah Tikva, construction company Immigrant Residences is offering five-room, 140-sq.m. apartments for NIS 850,000, non-indexed, in a 36-residence apartment building.

In Rehovot, on Rehov Pines, a five-room apartment with a large, sunny porch, was sold for \$250,000.

Haifa (residential)
In the Old Romema neighborhood, a five-bedroom apartment with two small porches was sold for \$265,000. The 117-sq.m. apartment has a 90-sq.m. yard and a private parking space.

On Rehov Hanita, a 3.5-room, 90-sq.m. apartment was sold for \$127,000. The apartment requires renovations and had an asking price of \$160,000.

When the market is all bull

Considering that election seasons are usually fraught with the kind of uncertainty which is anathema to investors, the TASE's recent rally may have some sinister explanations

MARKET WATCH

By DAN GERSHBERG

Nineteen-ninety-eight was a nerve-racking year for investors in Israeli stocks. After hitting an all-time high in mid-August the Tel Aviv Stock Exchange underwent a serious weight loss therapy just days later, triggered by global financial woes.

Still, the bourse has of late miraculously recovered, even peaking to surpass its mark at the end of '97.

Apparently, this is no coincidence, though the causes for this resurgence are not necessarily those a conservative investor would embrace.

A close look at recent events suggests that some of the most powerful players active in the market had good reasons to help push its prices upwards.

Only two months ago the picture was completely different.

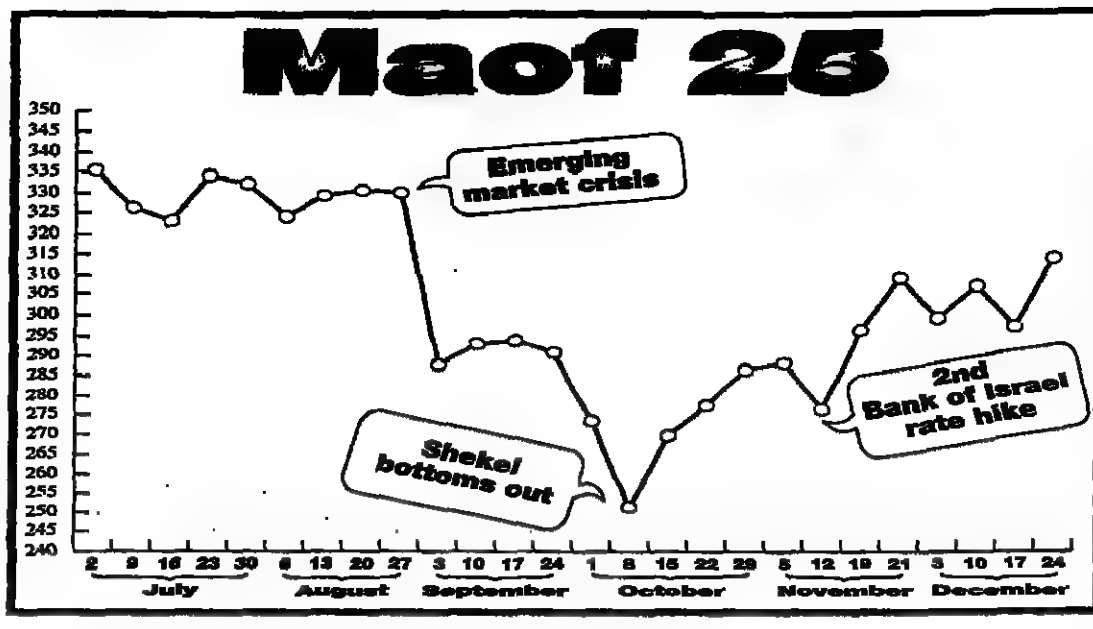
The Maof 25 Index, which had gained more than 100 percent in less than four years, lost some 37% of its value between mid-August and mid-October in the wake of growing uncertainty abroad and foreign investors' subsequent retreat from Israeli holdings, a trend which also triggered the shekel's depreciation in October.

Despite that, in less than two months the market has rebounded, gaining some 20%, although no major economic breakthrough was recorded.

The only objective fact that would support the positive trend is news coming from bullish Wall Street.

But, as some market sources note, the rally in Wall Street is also worrying, since expectations are rife for a cataclysmic correction that would put an end to this decade's phenomenal bull market in New York. In that event, TASE investors are likely to learn, yet again that when America sneezes Tel Aviv catches the flu.

Meanwhile, a number of factors should have depressed the local market.



Against the backdrop of the latest political developments, the resignation of Finance Minister Ya'acov Neeman and the government's looming failure to pass the 1999 budget, investors were expected to either reduce their stock holdings or wait on the sidelines as developments unfolded.

Taking into consideration that pre-election periods are usually fraught with the kind of uncertainty which is anathema to investors, the recent rally has no logical explanation. In addition, a government in transition is not expected to take urgent steps aimed at tackling economic challenges. Moreover, a coalition that wishes to get reelected tends to generate an era of good feeling through so-called elections economics, i.e. suddenly increased public spending.

But the outlook for the local economy is gloomy for several reasons. The local gross domestic product (GDP) grew by only 1.5% this year, representing a negative per-capita growth of some 1%. Forecasts for 1999 are an increase of only 2.5%, according to the Treasury - whose predictions have repeatedly proved overly optimistic in recent years.

Moreover, the shekel's recent loss of altitude is expected to result in sharply increased

finance expenses for many Israeli companies who took foreign-currency-linked loans. Such companies are likely to report reduced earnings.

Analysts note that the impact of the shekel's decline must ultimately become apparent, albeit only once companies start publishing their fourth-quarter earnings next year. In addition, the banking sector, which comprises a large portion of the Maof Index, is also expected to suffer from higher provisions for doubtful debts, in the wake of the shekel's travails.

The TASE's conspicuous recovery, therefore, seems to be less a reflection of great expectations for a major economic recovery and more a case of aggressive window dressing on behalf of large mutual funds and portfolio managers scrambling to display good-looking returns even in the midst of a turbulent landscape.

The Maof 25 index is currently 3.4% higher than it was at the end of last year, while the Tel Aviv 100 index has gained 4.6%. It should be noted, however, that with annual inflation of some 8.5%-9% in 1998, stock prices present a negative annual return in real terms. Yet if the current trend continues, then who knows, fund managers may even end up

showing positive, real-term returns.

A veteran portfolio manager told me this week there is no doubt that the recent rise is completely artificial and suggested that institutional investors are doing their best to improve their appearance.

A close look at the graph of the Maof index supports his assumption.

The market's rebound came in two waves. The first started on October 13 and came to a temporary halt at the beginning of November, after the Bank of Israel announced a sudden 2% increase in interest rates.

The second wave started just a few days later, on November 16, a mere two trading days after the central bank raised rates by another 2% in a surprise move aimed at stemming the shekel's decline.

Now it can be argued of course that the enthusiastic reaction to a 4% rise in interest rates in less than two weeks demonstrates investors' satisfaction with the central bank's resolve to keep the economy on course.

Yet that's a bit odd, considering stock markets' tendency to react unfavorably to sharp rate hikes, which ordinarily raise the attractiveness of bond alternatives to

shares while casting shadows over publicly-traded firms' ability to perform as they would under more monetarily lax conditions.

The fact that the market started rising when it did suggests that those who wanted to see stock prices go up realized that the second rate hike will stop the shekel's fall and restore stability to the market, thus allowing them to momentarily manipulate prices with the lower risk of extending losses.

Against a backdrop of low turnovers and limited foreign-investor activity, the scene was abandoned to those who wished to see higher stock prices.

The window dressing phenomenon, which is not new to Tel Aviv's trading floors and takes place also in other stock markets around the world, was further intensified this year with the introduction of the 11th Amendment to the Coordination Law.

The new amendment, which becomes effective January 1, was designed to abolish a loophole in corporate-tax legislation.

In the past, investment companies that had publicly traded subsidiaries did not have to pay taxes on capital gains.

Starting next year companies holding a controlling stake of more than 10% in publicly traded companies will be taxed should their subsidiaries' shares appreciate.

Such interested parties are therefore doing everything they can to raise their holdings' value before the law comes into power, while also handing out generous dividends, increasing holdings and promising to buy back shares.

Investors, therefore, should not be impressed by the sudden generosity of interested parties.

The fact that companies which haven't distributed dividends for years suddenly hand out large dividends does not necessarily indicate that they finally realized the importance of satisfying investors.

Indeed, the sudden readiness to please investors may very soon disappear; maybe even as soon as next week.

Online shopping reaches crossroads

Even traditional retailers like Compaq and Apple are beginning to take orders in cyberspace, often at substantial discounts

MARKETING

NEW YORK - As in any holiday season in recent years, much is being said these days throughout the developed world about shopping on the Internet.

From books to Beanie Babies, vitamins to Viagra, shoppers can probably find it on the Web. So-called "portal" sites like Netscape and Excite are teaming up with retailers to form online malls.

Sales have been doubling every year for the last two years, and are expected to reach tens of billions of dollars this year.

"This may well be the year that online shopping reaches critical mass," said Jack Staff, chief economist for Zena Research, a marketing consulting company based in San Francisco. But whatever success other retailers have pushing products on the Web, computers continue to be the benchmark, the "real deal," Staff said.

Depending on how you're counting, personal computers, peripherals and software still account for substantially over half the value of all sales on the Internet.

Build-to-order vendors like Gateway have seen an increasing fraction of their business shift from phone orders to automated "shopping cart" purchases online. So have catalog companies like Tiger Direct and PC Mall.

And even the more traditional retailers, like Compaq and Apple, are beginning to take orders in cyberspace, often at substantial discounts over list price for discontinued items, overstocks and refurbished gear that you can't find anywhere else.

Intense competition is the rule, not the exception.

BUT while the Internet brings unparalleled resources to the home-computer buyer, thanks to the many freebie corporate sites that front for computer publications, it also brings several problems.

The biggest is that shopping skills honed in brick and mortar stores don't translate well to cyberspace.

FATHER XMAS AT MAC CONNECTION W. W. W. MACCONNECTION.COM

MEIR RONEN © 98



you know to beware. But with a flashy site, cheeseball.com can look respectable," said Forrester Research's Maria LaTour Kadison.

The other problem on the Web is that an uncertain relationship exists between advertising and content, one that can be less than obvious.

All sorts of alliances and reimbursements are embedded in Web pages and links, not all of them as obvious as advertising in a newspaper.

If portals like Yahoo! are the shopping malls of cyberspace, limiting your shopping to one such site is a lot like shopping at just one mall; there may be better values elsewhere, maybe even in a little shop tucked away on the electronic equivalent of a side street.

Not surprisingly, in this new frontier cyberspace shoppers have to watch out for fraud. According to the National Fraud Information Center (www.fraud.org), so-called Web auctions are rife with fraud; consumers who "win" a computer or other merchandise in bidding often don't receive the merchandise. Sales between individuals via Web classifieds also have been a problem, the organization says.

Interestingly enough, the one thing that makes most people nervous about cyberspace shopping

sending a credit card number over the Net - apparently isn't a problem.

The center "has not received a single complaint of someone's credit card number being stolen while it was being transmitted to a legitimate merchant," a spokesman for the group said recently.

Thus, if you follow some basic advice, your odds of being scammed are minimal.

START your online shopping adventure by learning as much as you can about the merchandise that interests you.

That means studying the Big Four: CNET, a Web site with scads of original reporting; Ziff-Davis (which publishes PC Magazine, Family PC, MacWeek); CMP Publications (which publishes Windows Magazine and Information Week); and IDG Publications (which publishes PC World and InfoWorld).

While the comparison reviews are objective and useful for picking out the type of system or hardware you want, the actual vendor lists supplied aren't necessarily the last word on the subject, since the selections may be skewed by advertising considerations.

CNET's site is concise and useful for beginners (it's at www.computers.com/stc.hardware.more.co).

Hardware is organized generically (desktop, notebooks, scanners, digital cameras, modems, etc.). There's also a solid lead-in describing how, for example, a modem works, the latest trends and links to a series of reviews and ratings of individual products.

The individual products in turn are linked to specific online merchant sites and prices: Good deals become "Editor's Choices," and in many cases you can set criteria to filter out products that are too expensive or that don't meet your needs.

CMP's TechShopper (at www.techweb.com/shopper) follows a similar format, pulling together reviews and news from CMP's stable of publications.

While some price comparisons among outlets are available, CMP has a marketing agreement with NECC, one of the Web's biggest online sales outfits, and steers its users there (at neccdirect.necc.com:80).

This is less obnoxious than it sounds, since CMP's biggest competitor, Ziff-Davis, rates NECC as the Internet's top direct-sales site.

CMP also offers classified ads for computers at www.classifieds2000.com.

The Killer site for serious shoppers is Computer Shopper.com, at www.zdnet.com/computer-shopper/index.html, the online

offshoot of Ziff-Davis' weighty monthly digest of ads from virtually every mail-order computer company in the US.

For the truly undecided, Computer Shopper has an excellent interactive guide that gives the user a form to fill out, describing your typical uses for a computer.

The "wizard" then tells you what kind of computer you should buy and also gives a list of typical systems in your price range.

Caveat emptor: As in computer magazines, there are some real hole-in-the-wall computer manufacturers listed.

All it takes to go into the computer manufacturing business is a crate of parts from Taiwan, and the lower the prices you see, the more careful you should be about checking out the company.

Finally, among the review sites is IDG's PCWorld Online, more suited to the professional business user than the casual home computerist.

Check out the PC World's Top 400 Products and interactive buying guide. You'll get manufacturers and model numbers, but if you want vendor names and price quotes, you'll have to pay for them.

Another good source of information - and in some cases actual product - are manufacturers' sites, particularly those of the bigger vendors, who in recent years have begun selling direct to

the consumer.

Compaq At Home (located at athome.compaq.com/store/index.asp) offers custom configuration of selected Presario models, and the prices are worth comparing to those you would pay at a retail store.

There's also a "factory outlet" where returned and refurbished merchandise is available at a steep discount with full manufacturer's warranty.

At \$529 (within the US), a Presario 4550, with an AMD K-6 233, looked like a pretty good deal for a second computer.

Besides Compaq, other manufacturers' online stores worth checking out include:

- The Apple Store at www.apple.com, which is also offering a finance plan (\$29.95 per month) for the hot new iMac.
- Packard Bell/NEC at www.pcfactoryoutlet.com/homepage.asp, which even has a mailing list for particularly hot deals.
- IBM at www.ibm.com/Shop.
- Traditional mail-order vendors, including Gateway at www.gateway.com; Dell at www.dell.com; Micron at www.micron.com; and Midwest Micro at www.mwmiro.com.

One of the neater things you'll find among these vendors is the so-called "roll your own" page: You pick out a basic computer model, then modify the standard equipment by adding, say, more memory and a bigger monitor and omitting the modem. You then get an immediate update on the price of this custom system, which is then built to order in a couple of weeks.

Finally, for the real cornucopia of products, check out the online superstores.

Most are outgrowths of catalog operations, and you'll usually find more product detail in their catalogs, which you can order via the Web site:

- NECC at www.necc.com - PC Mall (www.cc-inc.com/home.asp)
- Tiger Direct (www.tigerdirect.com)
- Mac Connection (www.macconnection.com)
- CDW (www.cdw.com)
- Outpost.com (www.outpost.com)
- BuyComp (www.buycomp.com)
- PC Zone (www.pczones.com) (Note: Some of these have companion sites dedicated to Macintosh users.) (Newsday)

Alwaleed, Mediaset, News Corp. delay Kirch takeover talks

MILAN - Mediaset SpA, Italy's largest commercial television company, said it doesn't expect to resume negotiations with News Corp. Europe and Saudi investor Prince Alwaleed Bin Talal about investing in Germany's Kirch Group until the New Year.

A report in the Turin daily La Stampa said that the four-sided talks, aimed at finalizing the terms under which Mediaset, News Corp. and Alwaleed will buy stakes in Taurus, Kirch's media holding company, would take place in Milan today.

"Senior executives will not be seeing each other during the holiday period," a Mediaset spokesman said, without ruling out the possibility of lower-level encounters.

The spokesman said talks at a senior level would restart after January 6.

The prospective alliance, which was first reported in Germany's Focus magazine over this past weekend, comes after News Corp. Europe, the European arm of the world's fifth largest media company, agreed to purchase up to 80 percent of Telecom Italia SpA's unprofitable Stream pay-television unit, forming the core of a second digital platform in Italy.

Mediaset said two parallel sets of talks were proceeding at the same time.

One concerns an investment in Kirch, Germany's second-largest media company, by the other three companies, the other an industrial alliance sealed by a share swap between Kirch and Mediaset.

La Stampa yesterday morning reported that Taurus, which will hold the rights to more than 15,000 movies, 60,000 hours of programming, as well as broadcast rights for the soccer World Cups in 2002 and 2006, may serve as the core of what could become a European pay-television network.

La Stampa said News Corp. may invest as much as \$1 billion. Alwaleed will invest about \$400 million, while Mediaset will swap about 13 percent of its shares, a stake worth more than \$1.1b.

Mediaset shares rose 142 lire to 13,100 in a rising market. (Bloomberg)

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Waugh strengthens Aussies' position



THE FACE OF ENGLISH CRICKET - Mike Atherton takes the long walk back after registering his first-ever pair in Test cricket.

MELBOURNE (Reuters) - England were struggling after the third day of the fourth Ashes Test yesterday after the familiar figure of Steve Waugh tormented their bowlers with a fighting century.

England carved out an unbeaten 122 at the Melbourne Cricket Ground to give Australia a 70 run lead on the first innings as the home side clawed their way to 340 in reply to England's 270.

England, in their second innings, battled their way to 65 for two by the close of play, still five runs behind with eight wickets in hand and two days to go.

"The crucial thing is that we've won most of the big moments in the game," Waugh said.

"We tend to sense the moment when we really need to take a wicket or we need a good partnership and that's what we've done so far."

England captain Alec Stewart finished the day unbeaten on 43 following his century in the first innings. Opener Mike Atherton, who has scored just 110 runs in eight innings since his first Test for England - after he was clean bowled by a near perfect, straightening delivery from Damien Fleming.

Butcher went for 14 after an extraordinary catch by Michael Slater. The Englishman smashed a delivery from leg spinner Stuart MacGill straight into Slater at silly short leg only to see the ball stick.

"That catch probably summed up the day for England. They did a lot of hard work but probably didn't get the luck they deserved," Waugh said.

England probably expected to get a lead at some stage but ended up 70 behind. It doesn't do a lot for your confidence, then when you lose two wickets behind that total it makes it tough. Australia, who retained the Ashes by winning the third Test in Adelaide to open up an unbeatable 2-0 lead in the five-match series, tightened the screws on England in the final session.

England enjoyed the best of the first two sessions and even looked likely to take a first innings lead after reducing Australia to 252-8 by tea.

But Waugh and MacGill turned the match Australia's way with a partnership off 88 for the ninth wicket.

Waugh, twice stranded in the 90s during England's last visit to Australia, batted patiently after coming to the crease with his team in trouble at 98-3 but was forced to lift the tempo when Australia lost their eighth wicket while he was on 77.

He reached his hundred, scampering through for the two runs he needed, raising his bat in triumph as the crowd of 43,353 afforded him a standing ovation.

Waugh's hundred was his 17th in Tests, his seventh against England and his second this series.

During his innings, he also passed

Sir Donald Bradman as Australia's fifth highest scorer in Test cricket and became only the 16th player in

history to make at least 7,000 runs in Tests.

Alan Mullally claimed the last two

wickets to finish with three for 64 while Gough, who bowled magnificently throughout the day, returned five for 96, his fifth five-wicket haul in Tests and his third against Australia.

Veteran seamer Angus Fraser, who finished with two for 78, made the early breakthrough when he trapped Mark Waugh lbw for 36 after he and Langer had added 39 to Australia's overnight total of 59-2.

Langer, man of the match in Australia's third Test win in Adelaide after scoring 179 not out in the first innings, departed shortly after 44 with the total on 127 when he fended a ball from Gough straight to Nasser Hussain at gully.

Lehmann, called into the side after selectors dropped Ricky Ponting, looked in ominous form as he quickly made his way to 13 before a rush of blood cost him his wicket.

Healy, who scored 134 in the first test of the series, went for 36 when he hooked Fraser straight to Headley in the deep.

Mullally picked up his first wicket when he bowled Fleming caught behind for 12 and Gough cleaned up Nicholson for five before Waugh put Australia back in the driver's seat.

"I think we're in good shape, especially if we can take a couple of wickets tomorrow morning," Waugh said.

"The England tail hasn't done well so far and we'd be backing ourselves to knock them over."

Windies collapse after superb Gibbs catch

DURBAN (Reuters) - A brilliant catch by Herschelle Gibbs sparked a West Indies second innings slump that left South Africa in sight of a winning 3-0 series lead in the third Test yesterday.

Gibbs dived full length to his left at square leg to hold the chance that dismissed captain Brian Lara for 79, ending a third wicket stand of 160, with Shivnarine Chanderpaul.

However, Lara's departure began the collapse in which West Indies, 114 behind on first innings, tumbled from 201 for two to 214 for seven in seven overs.

When the close came 14.1 overs early due to bad light, West Indies were 246 for eight, 132 ahead.

South Africa, who already lead the five-Test series 2-0, were bowled out for 312 in their first innings in the

morning after resuming on 292 for eight.

Lara and Chanderpaul, who stroked 75, produced West Indies' best batting of the series when they joined forces at 41 for two.

Wallace was caught behind by Mark Boucher off Allan Donald for one and makeshift opener Murray, who is essentially a wicketkeeper, went for 29 when Jacques Kallis had him caught off the spine by Gibbs at square leg.

Lara and Chanderpaul then embarked on the partnership that kept their side in contention until Gibbs' stunning catch tilted the balance.

The West Indies skipper played a full-bodied pull off pace bowler David Terbrugge and Gibbs flung himself to his left to hold the catch,

ending Lara's innings of 187 minutes in which he faced 139 balls and hit 15 fours.

Five balls later Chanderpaul was caught and bowled by Shaun Pollock, having batted 238 minutes, received 169 deliveries and struck 13 fours.

The decline accelerated when Carl Hooper went to a low, one-handed catch on the leg side by Boucher off Pollock for two.

However, television replays showed the ball took the ground as the wicketkeeper took it. Gibbs then took his third and most impressive catch of the innings when Darren Ganga, on five facing Pollock, spiced an attempted hook to square leg. Forced to sprint towards the boundary while watching the ball descend over his shoulder, Gibbs dived to take the catch in

his left hand.

An over later, Ravi Lewis was caught behind off Donald to complete a pair, giving the South African fast bowler his 250th Test wicket.

Wicketkeeper Ridley Jacobs, as he did in the first innings when he was last out for 39, stood admirably firm for his 12 not out until the close.

South Africa had been dismissed 4.4 overs into the morning session.

New Zealand-India

In Wellington, India led New Zealand by 35 runs at the close on the third day of their second Test with seven second innings wickets in hand, including master batsman Sachin Tendulkar and skipper Mohammed Azharuddin.

Tendulkar, on 42, and Saurav Ganguly, 47, were together after an unfinished partnership of 67 that saw

India to 179 for three. Azharuddin, who hit an unbeaten 103 in India's first innings of 208, is still to bat.

New Zealand, after a record eighth wicket partnership of 137 between Dion Nash and Daniel Vettori, were all out soon after lunch for 352 in their first innings for a lead of 144.

WEST INDIES 1st innings 188
SOUTH AFRICA 1st innings 312 (overnight)
G. Kirsten c Hooper b Rose 25
H. Gibbs c Wallace b Rose 25
J. Kallis c Jacobs b Rose 11
D. Ganga c Boucher b Rose 29
H. Hooper c Boucher b Rose 29
J. Rhodes c and b Wallace 37
S. Pollock c Hooper b Rose 30
M. Boucher b Rose 30
P. Symcox b Rose 32
A. Donald b Rose 13
D. Terbrugge not out 28
Extras (b-4 b-5 b-10) 28
Total (all out, 88 overs) 312
Fall of wickets: 1-57 2-79 3-80 4-140 5-182 6-222 7-250 8-294 9-295
Bowling: Ambrose 17-1-50-0 (nb-1), Walsh 25-6-65-2 (nb-1), Rose 25-6-84-7 (nb-1), Lewis 20-2-70-0, Hooper 4-0-15-0.

ENGLAND 1st Innings 270
AUSTRALIA 1st Innings 340 (59-2 overnight)

M. Taylor c Hick b Gough	44
M. Slater c Gough	44
Langer c Hussain b Gough	36
M. Waugh not out	122
D. Lehmann c Hogg b Gough	13
J. Healy c Headley b Fraser	36
D. Fleming c Hick b Mullally	12
M. Nicholson b Gough	5
S. MacGill c Hogg b Mullally	43
G. McGrath b Mullally	0
Extras (b-4 b-6 nb-1)	21
Total (98.5 overs)	340
Fall of wickets: 1-13 2-26 3-36 4-127 5-151 6-209 7-236 8-252 9-340 10-340	

ENGLAND 2nd Innings

A. Stewart not out	43
M. Butcher c Slater b MacGill	14
D. Headley not out	8
Extras (b-2 nb-8)	10
Total (for two wickets, 22 overs)	65
Fall of wickets: 1-2-61 2-12-11 3-12-11 4-1-11 5-1-11 6-1-11 7-1-11 8-1-11 9-1-11 10-1-11	

British soccer results and standings

Premier League: Aston Villa 2, Sheffield Wednesday 1; Charlton 0, Arsenal 1; Derby 2, Middlesbrough 1; Liverpool 4, Newcastle 2; Nottingham Forest 1, Southampton 1; Tottenham 4, Everton 1; West Ham 2, Coventry 0.

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Division One: Barnsley 1, Queens Park Rangers 0; Bradford 2, Tranmere 0; Bristol City 3, Swindon 1; Bury 2, Birmingham 4; Crystal Palace 1, West Bromwich Albion 1; Exeter 1, Stockport 0; Port Vale 0, Bolton 0; Portsmouth 2, Oxford United 2; Sheffield United 2, Huddersfield 1; Sunderland 2, Crewe 0; Wolves 1, Ipswich 0.

Division Three: Brentford 1, Cardiff 0; Carlisle 1, Cambridge United 1; Chester 1, Mansfield 1; Darlington 1, Leyton Orient 1; Hartlepool 0, Rochdale 1; Peterborough 1, Brighton 2; Plymouth 1, Exeter 0; Rotherham 3, Halifax 1; Scarborough 1, Southport 4; Shrewsbury 3, Hull 2; Swansea 2, Barnet 1; Torquay 2, Southend 0.

Division Four: Barrow 1, Grimsby 0; Bury 1, Wrexham 0; Carlisle 1, York 0; Colchester 1, Luton 0; Crewe 1, Notts County 0; Darlington 1, Macclesfield 0; Exeter 1, Hartlepool 0; Grimsby 1, Lincoln City 0; Huddersfield 1, Mansfield 0; Ipswich 1, Peterborough 0; Leyton Orient 1, Rochdale 0; Luton 1, Shrewsbury 0; Macclesfield 1, Southend 0; Mansfield 1, Torquay 0; Notts County 1, Walsall 0; Peterborough 1, Wycombe 0; Plymouth 1, Exeter 0; Rotherham 1, Halifax 0; Scarborough 1, Southport 0; Shrewsbury 1, Hull 0; Swansea 1, Barnet 0; Torquay 1, Southend 0.

Division Five: Barrow 1, Grimsby 0; Bury 1, Wrexham 0; Carlisle 1, York 0; Colchester 1, Luton 0; Crewe 1, Notts County 0; Darlington 1, Macclesfield 0; Exeter 1, Hartlepool 0; Grimsby 1, Lincoln City 0; Huddersfield 1, Mansfield 0; Ipswich 1, Peterborough 0; Leyton Orient 1, Rochdale 0; Luton 1, Shrewsbury 0; Macclesfield 1, Southend 0; Mansfield 1, Torquay 0; Notts County 1, Walsall 0; Peterborough 1, Wycombe 0; Plymouth 1, Exeter 0; Rotherham 1, Halifax 0; Scarborough 1, Southport 0; Shrewsbury 1, Hull 0; Swansea 1, Barnet 0; Torquay 1, Southend 0.

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SPORTS

in brief

Divac joins Red Star Belgrade

BELGRADE (Reuters) - Yugoslav Vlade Divac of the Charlotte Hornets has joined the NBA lockout exodus and signed for Red Star Belgrade, the Yugoslav media reported yesterday.

Divac said he had rejected a much more lucrative offer from Kinder Bologna in order to boost Yugoslav basketball.

State Cup basketball semis set

Maccabi Tel Aviv will face Maccabi Ramat Gan, and Hapoel Jerusalem will meet Hapoel Haifa in the basketball's State Cup semifinals after the draw was made in Tel Aviv yesterday. The games are to be played on January 28.

Maccabi Tel Aviv and Hapoel Jerusalem are the overwhelming favorites to meet in the final.

Eli Groner

Caesarea golf

Friday's unfavorable weather put pay to the golf, but the KC-two best balls stableford competition went ahead on Saturday as scheduled.

Finishing in first place were Harold Stutzen, Mike Mamor, Dan Katzenellenbogen and Zvi Shachar with a 17 better than par 89 points.

In a distant second spot were Jules Cuburnek, Amos Amir, Mavi Geri and Guy Katzenellenbogen (Dan's 11-year-old son) with 81 points.

The best individual score was Shachar's five better than par 41 points.

Kfar Shmaryahu has won the National Orange League with 88 points. Kfar Sava finished second with 34 and Herzliya took third place with 30.

Heather Chait

Romantsev to coach Russia again

MOSCOW (Reuters) - Oleg Romantsev, head coach of Russian champions Spartak Moscow, took charge of the national team for the second time yesterday.

He succeeded Anatoly Byshovets, sacked this month after just five months in charge. It was Russia's sixth change of coach in as many years.

Romantsev, 45 next week, was appointed at a meeting of the Russian Football Union. He previously led Russia to Euro 96 but was dismissed after the team performed poorly in the finals.

Byshovets, a former Dynamo Kiev and USSR striker, who coached the former Soviet Union to the 1992 European championship finals, was sacked after six straight defeats, including three European qualifiers, one against Iceland.

Oilers slide past Canucks



EDMONTON, Alberta (AP) - Rookie defenseman Tom Poti scored early in the second period and Mikhael Shtalenkov made 24 saves for the Edmonton Oilers beat the Vancouver Canucks 3-0 Sunday night.

Pat Falloon and Kelly Buchberger also scored for the Oilers (15-16-3). The Oilers ended a 0-for-35 power-play drought when Poti opened the scoring at 2:34 of the second period with his third goal of the season. It was Edmonton's first power-play goal since Dec. 8 in Nashville.

The Oilers, who outshot the Canucks 34-25, are 3-0 this season against Vancouver.

Avalanche 2, Flames 1
Goalender Craig Billington, substituting for injured Patrick Roy, made 30 saves as the visiting Colorado Avalanche defeated the Calgary Flames.

Adam Deadmarsh and Shean

EASTERN CONFERENCE						
Atlantic Division						
	W	L	T	Pts	GF	GA
New Jersey	19	9	4	41	94	58
Pittsburgh	19	9	4	40	91	73
Pittsburgh	14	10	7	35	83	84
N.Y. Rangers	12	14	7	31	90	90
N.Y. Islanders	13	19	2	28	86	98
Northeast Division						
Buffalo	19	6	5	43	87	51
Toronto	19	13	2	40	107	97
Boston	15	11	6	36	85	67
Ottawa	15	13	3	33	90	76
Montreal	9	18	7	25	73	96
Central Division						
Carolina	16	14	5	37	89	84
Florida	12	12	6	30	76	81
Washington	10	16	3	23	65	81
Tampa Bay	8	23	3	19	69	119

WESTERN CONFERENCE						
Central Division						
	W	L	T	Pts	GF	GA
St. Louis	17	15	3	32	102	91
St. Louis	12	11	8	32	83	79
Nashville	12	16	3	29	79	97
Chicago	10	20	4	24	77	113
Northwest Division						
Colorado	15	16	3	33	79	84
Edmonton	15	16	3	33	84	89
Vancouver	13	17	4	30	94	100
Calgary	12	19	3	27	92	102
Pacific Division						
West	21	5	4	46	96	65
Phoenix	20	6	4	44	89	56
Anaheim	13	12	7	33	76	73
San Jose	10	15	7	27	69	74
Los Angeles	10	21	3	23	74	93

NFL

Continued from Page 20

Knocked out of the NFC wild-card picture by Tampa Bay's victory earlier in the day, the Giants (8-8) finished their season by winning their fourth straight and fifth in six games.

The Eagles (3-13) finished with their worst record since going 2-11-1 in 1972. Rhodes, named coach of the year in his first season with the Eagles in 1995, said this week that he expects to be fired soon after the season.

49ers 38, Rams 19

Host San Francisco won its 17th straight regular-season home game and earned the right to play host to the Packers in their wild-card playoff game.

Rookie R.W. McQuarter returned a punt 72 yards for a touchdown and Steve Young passed for two TDs and ran for another in San Francisco's 17th straight victory over the Rams (4-12).

It's the second-longest win streak against an opponent in NFL history, trailing Washington's 18-game run over Detroit.

Wade Richey added field goals of 44, 27 and 20 yards for the 49ers (12-4), who haven't lost to the Rams since 1990, when they were still based in Anaheim.

Cowboys 23, Redskins 7

Host Dallas became the first team to sweep all of its NFC East games in a season, defeating Washington behind Emmitt Smith's two touchdowns runs, giving him the NFL career record.

Dallas finished the season 10-6 overall and 8-0 against the NFC East, sweeping Washington for the first time since 1994. The New York Giants almost accomplished the eight-game sweep last season, but they were 7-0-1.

Under new coach Chan Gailey, the Cowboys turned their record around from a 6-10 season that cost Barry Switzer his job.

Washington had a four-game winning streak snapped and completed the season at 6-10 under Norv Turner.

Dallas will meet Arizona (9-7) in Texas Stadium on Saturday in a first-round NFC playoff game.

Smith broke the NFL record for career rushing touchdowns on a 1-yard run in the second quarter. A 51-yard pass from Troy Aikman to Michael Irvin set up the score. The

124th rushing TD for Smith, breaking a tie with Marcus Allen. Smith struck again on the Cowboys' next possession as he broke three tackles on a 26-yard touchdown run.

In games reported in yesterday's edition:

Buccaneers 35, Bengals 0

Visiting Tampa Bay kept its playoff hopes alive by beating the Bengals behind Mike Alstott's career-high three TD runs. But they were eliminated about four hours later when Arizona beat San Diego to clinch the final NFC wild-card berth.

Jets 31, Patriots 10

Vinny Testaverde threw four touchdowns passes as the New York Jets set a franchise record with their 12th victory.

Falcons 38, Dolphins 16

The Falcons enter the postseason with a nine-game winning streak. Despite the loss, Miami earned a home playoff game when New England lost to the Jets.

Ravens 19, Lions 10

Priest Holmes scored a touchdown and became the Ravens' first 1,000-yard rusher as Baltimore (6-10) closed a disappointing season by beating the error-prone Detroit Lions (5-11).

AMERICAN CONFERENCE						
	W	L	T	Pts	GF	GA
East	12	4	0	25	416	266
Buffalo	10	6	0	21	265	265
Indianapolis	9	7	0	19	337	329
Indianapolis	3	13	0	6	188	310
NATIONAL CONFERENCE						
	W	L	T	Pts	GF	GA
East	10	6	0	21	381	275
Atlanta	9	7	0	19	325	378
Atlanta	8	8	0	16	280	309
Washington	6	10	0	12	319	421
Philadelphia	3	13	0	6	161	344

NATIONAL CONFERENCE						
	W	L	T	Pts	GF	GA
East	10	6	0	21	381	275
Atlanta	9	7	0	19	325	378
Atlanta	8	8	0	16	280	309
Washington	6	10	0	12	319	421
Philadelphia	3	13	0	6	161	344

x-clinched division berth
x-clinched division title
Last night: Pittsburgh at Jacksonville

Television pictures show an Australian Maritime Safety Authority helicopter lowers a winchman into the torrid waters off New South Wales in an attempt to rescue a yachtsman from an unidentified yachtsman in the Sydney-Hobart race.

2 DEAD

Continued from Page 20

Their bodies were left on board the boat but attempts were being made to recover them as soon as possible, rescue officials said.

"Dad loved sailing," said Guy's son, Mark. "He loved the competition. He also loved a beer and a talk after the race. Dad simply loved life." British sailor Glyn Charles was washed off the Sword of Orion yacht on Sunday night and presumed drowned.

Robin Pike, a spokesman for the Australian Maritime Safety Authority, said it was unlikely the 33-year-old Charles could survive more than 24 hours in the wild seas. "He will be a superman if he makes it," Pike said.

Six crew members from the Winston Churchill yacht were plucked from two life rafts late tonight, but three others were missing.

"We are unsure about what has happened to the other three. It appears they were washed out of the life raft," a spokesman for the maritime authority said.

Maritime spokesman David Gray said many other sailors had suffered injuries.

"There's just many injuries on those yachts that got knocked down. A lot of them rolled over - one rolled over twice," Gray said. "They really got pounded yesterday." Winston

Churchill skipper Richard Winning, who was rescued off one of the life rafts, told of a frantic struggle to stay alive.

"After we got into the life raft and became separated from the others, the damned thing capsize twice on these great seas at night which is bloody frightening. Let me tell you," Winning said.

"You have got four of us underneath this little canopy, and the next thing is you are upside down. I wouldn't want to have spent another night out there."

American John Campbell was rescued by a police helicopter after being swept overboard when his yacht rolled over. Campbell got hypothermia after being in

cold water for about 40 minutes. Senior Constable Barry Barclay dropped into large swells from a helicopter to rescue him.

"I was definitely worried," Campbell said on television.

"There was a point I didn't think I was going to survive." American yacht Sayonara was narrowly ahead of last year's winner, Brindabella, and expected to cross the finish line today.

The first recorded death in the race, which started in 1945, was in 1984 when a 72-year-old yachtsman was washed overboard and presumed drowned.

In 1989, a 58-year-old man died from head injuries after a gale snapped his boat's mast.

Wannstedt's dismissal in Chicago, even though he finished 4-12 for the second straight year. His team played hard every week and even owner Mike McCaskey conceded that the team's talent level was lower than needed to compete in the US National Football League.

"This is a very disappointing day for me and my family," Wannstedt said at a news conference with McCaskey. "I do respect his decision for making what he feels is the best decision for the organization."

Wannstedt acknowledged that a number of mistakes in drafting and signing free agents were made during his tenure.

Capers, the only coach the Panthers have had in their four seasons, was fired two seasons after taking the team to the NFC championship game in its second year. But Carolina finished 7-9 last year and 4-12 this season as it fell apart on the field and within the locker room.

Rhodes also lasted four years, taking the Eagles to the playoffs in his first two. But he fought with the front office from the start and this season the team collapsed, falling to 3-13 with the worst offense in the league.

4 coaches fired in offseason purge



NEW YORK (AP) - The offseason purge of American football coaches began quickly yesterday.

Within one hour, Dom Capers of Carolina, Dave Wannstedt of Chicago, Ted Marchibroda of Baltimore and Ray Rhodes of Philadelphia were fired, beginning what looks to be a post-season of NFL coaching casualties.

Capers and Rhodes, both former coaches of the year, have already been mentioned for vacancies. Capers is a candidate for the opening in Philadelphia and Baltimore, and Rhodes is a candidate in Green Bay, where Mike Holmgren has the option of getting out of his contract for a coach-general manager position elsewhere.

The biggest surprise may have been Wannstedt's dismissal in Chicago, even though he finished 4-12 for the second straight year. His team played hard every week and even owner Mike McCaskey conceded that the team's talent level was lower than needed to compete in the US National Football League.

"This is a very disappointing day for me and my family," Wannstedt said at a news conference with McCaskey. "I do respect his decision for making what he feels is the best decision for the organization."

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Bearcats top Dayton to stay unbeaten

NCAA BASKETBALL

NEW YORK (AP) - Cincinnati had just held off Dayton to remain unbeaten and Bob Huggins said those things usually reserved for coaches whose teams haven't won much.

"I'm trying to think of something nice to say about us," he said Sunday after the third-ranked Bearcats beat Dayton 53-51 in the Rock-n-Roll Shootout in Cleveland. "We were lethargic. We missed 10 layups right away and got nothing from the bench."

"It was disappointing to play so bad," Cincinnati forward Ryan Fletcher said. "The feeling in the locker room was first relief and then a little nervousness about practice tomorrow."

"We're not looking forward to it after the speech we just got."

In other games involving ranked teams Sunday, it was: No. 4 Maryland 104, South Carolina State 70; No. 8 Indiana 102, Drake

46; Providence 87, No. 11 Purdue 82; No. 19 Wisconsin 87, Fresno State 65; and No. 22 Syracuse 71, St. Bonaventure 55.

College Basketball Top 25

The top 25 teams in the AP's men's college basketball poll, with first-place votes in parentheses, records through December 27, total points based on 25 points for a first-place vote through one point for a 25th-place vote and previous ranking:

	Record	Pts	Pv
1. Connecticut (83)	9-0	1,763	1
2. Duke (6)	11-1	1,687	2
3. Cincinnati (2)	11-0	1,636	4
4. Maryland	13-1	1,578	5
5. Stanford	9-2	1,480	6
6. Arizona	6-0	1,377	8
7. Kentucky	10-2	1,292	3
8. Indiana	12-3	1,223	10
9. North Carolina	10-1	1,201	7
10. UCLA	7-2	1,025	12
11. Purdue	12-2	988	9
12. St. John's	10-2	988	14
13. Michigan St.	9-3	904	15
14. Clemson	8-3	861	13
15. New Mexico	8-1	695	11
16. Minnesota	8-1	686	17
17. Auburn	11-0	645	18
18. Kansas	12-1	593	20
19. Wisconsin	9-2	422	19
20. Iowa	9-1	376	21
21. Syracuse	8-3	254	22
22. Pittsburgh	8-4	254	24
23. Texas Christian	10-2	123	25
24. Oklahoma St.	7-3	116	26

Wade-Sharpard 6 pass from T.Greene (Blanchard 10, 20, 30, 40, 50, 60, 70, 80, 90, 100, 110, 120, 130, 140, 150, 160, 170, 180, 190, 200, 210, 220, 230, 240, 250, 260, 270, 280, 290, 300, 310, 320, 330, 340, 350, 360, 370, 380, 390, 400, 410, 420, 430, 440, 450, 460, 470, 480, 490, 500, 510, 520, 530, 540, 550, 560, 570, 580, 590, 600, 610, 620, 630, 640, 650, 660, 670, 680, 690, 700, 710, 720, 730, 740, 750, 760, 770, 780, 790, 800, 810, 820, 830, 840, 850, 860, 870, 880, 890, 900, 910, 920, 930, 940, 950, 960, 970, 980, 990, 1,000, 1,010, 1,020, 1,030, 1,040, 1,050, 1,060, 1,070, 1,080, 1,090, 1,100, 1,110, 1,120, 1,130, 1,140, 1,150, 1,160, 1,170, 1,180, 1,190, 1,200, 1,210, 1,220, 1,230, 1,240, 1,250, 1,260, 1,270, 1,280, 1,290, 1,300, 1,310, 1,320, 1,330, 1,340, 1,350, 1,360, 1,370, 1,380, 1,390, 1,400, 1,410, 1,420, 1,430, 1,440, 1,450, 1,460, 1,470, 1,480, 1,490, 1,500, 1,510, 1,520, 1,530, 1,540, 1,550, 1,560, 1,570, 1,580, 1,590, 1,600, 1,610, 1,620, 1,630, 1,640, 1,650, 1,660, 1,670, 1,680, 1,690, 1,700, 1,710, 1,720, 1,730, 1,740, 1,750, 1,760, 1,770, 1,780, 1,790, 1,800, 1,810, 1,820, 1,830, 1,840, 1,850, 1,860, 1,870, 1,880, 1,890, 1,900, 1,910, 1,920, 1,930, 1,940, 1,950, 1,960, 1,970, 1,980, 1,990, 2,000, 2,010, 2,020, 2,030, 2,040, 2,050, 2,060, 2,070, 2,080, 2,090, 2,100, 2,110, 2,120, 2,130, 2,140, 2,150, 2,160, 2,170, 2,180, 2,190, 2,200, 2,210, 2,220, 2,230, 2,240, 2,250, 2,260, 2,270, 2,280, 2,290, 2,300, 2,310, 2,320, 2,330, 2,340, 2,350, 2,360, 2,370, 2,380, 2,390, 2,400, 2,4

CRITICS' CHOICE

CLASSICAL MUSIC

MICHAEL AJZENSTADT

Haifa music lovers will enjoy Izhak Perlman leading the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra in the overture to Mozart's *Le nozze di Figaro* and the Tchaikovsky Sinfonia Serenade. He'll also play the solo part in the Second Romance for Violin by Beethoven and in Mozart's Adagio and Rondo for Violin and Orchestra. The violinist's daughter, Nava Perlman, plays Beethoven's Third Piano Concerto tonight at the Haifa Auditorium at 8:30.

Harvey Bordowitz leads his Herzliya Chamber Orchestra in an all-Mozart program - the Overture to *Il Re Pastore*, the Masonic Funeral Music, the very popular 40th Symphony and the even more popular Sinfonia Concertante for Violin and Viola. Soloists are Zinoviy Kaplan and Avraham Leventhal. The performance is tonight at 8:30 at the Heichal Hatarbut in Netanya, and January 5 and 9 at the Herzliya Museum.

Musica Nova presents an open-stage concert featuring the works of young and upcoming Israeli composers Nurit Yugen, Marcel Goldman, Arie Ben-Knaz and Alexander Pachninyuk. Today at 3 p.m. at the Diaspora Museum in Tel Aviv. Admission free.

Doron Solomon leads the Ra'anana Symphonette in its light-hearted end-of-the-year concert in which soprano Efrat Rotem and tenor Yevgeny Shapovalov are the soloists in waltzes and other popular light-music numbers. Tonight, tomorrow and Thursday at Yad Labanin in Ra'anana at 9 p.m.

Daniel Hexter presents a masterclass for pianists today (5-10 p.m.) at the Israel Music Conservatory in Tel Aviv.

Czech pianist Raduslav Kvapil presents a recital of Czech piano music tonight at the Rubin Academy of Music at the Tel Aviv University at 8:30.



Nava Perlman plays with her famous dad.

ENGLISH THEATER

HELEN KAYE

The energetic Hadassah Center Stage Theater of Jerusalem presents a Neil Simon comedy, *Jake's Women*, directed by Kate Brody. Jake is a writer who conjures up images of the women in his life to help him resolve his life's puzzles. Like all of Simon, laughter and tears mix. At the theater tonight at 8:30. Tomorrow and Thursday at 8 p.m. Info: (02) 561-9165.

RADIO

VOICE OF MUSIC

8:05 Zabel: The Mazurka for Harp; Sarasate: Capriccio Basque; Paganini: Violin Concerto no 5
7:57 Mendelssohn: Variations for Piano and Violin
7:57 Beethoven: Piano Sonata no 4 op 7; Handel: Aria from the Messiah
8:05 Mozart: Chaconne for Piano
8:10 "Great Part": English Suite no 1 in A; Purcell: Orchestral Suite from the Fairy Queen; Haydn: Piano Sonata in C; H. 15; Beethoven: String Quartet op 18/4; Mahler: Das Lied von der Erde
8:05 Bach: English Suite no 1 in A; Purcell: Orchestral Suite from the Fairy Queen; Haydn: Piano Sonata in C; H. 15; Beethoven: String Quartet op 18/4; Mahler: Das Lied von der Erde
8:05 Bach: English Suite no 1 in A; Purcell: Orchestral Suite from the Fairy Queen; Haydn: Piano Sonata in C; H. 15; Beethoven: String Quartet op 18/4; Mahler: Das Lied von der Erde

RADIOWEST

CNN news on the hour followed by RadioWest local news
8:00 Morning Drive with David Stark (until 8:30)
8:30 Sports Update
8:30 Morning Drive with David Stark (until 8:30)
8:30 Sports Update
8:30 Morning Drive with David Stark (until 8:30)

14:00 World News
14:00 World News
14:00 World News
14:00 World News
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14:00 World News

TV

11:30 News Headlines
11:30 News Headlines
11:30 News Headlines
11:30 News Headlines
11:30 News Headlines
11:30 News Headlines
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MOVIE CHANNEL (4)

11:30 Shattered Family
(1993) - a boy from a broken home is placed in a foster home and experiences warmth and love for the first time. When his parents want him back he fights a legal battle for his right to choose a family.
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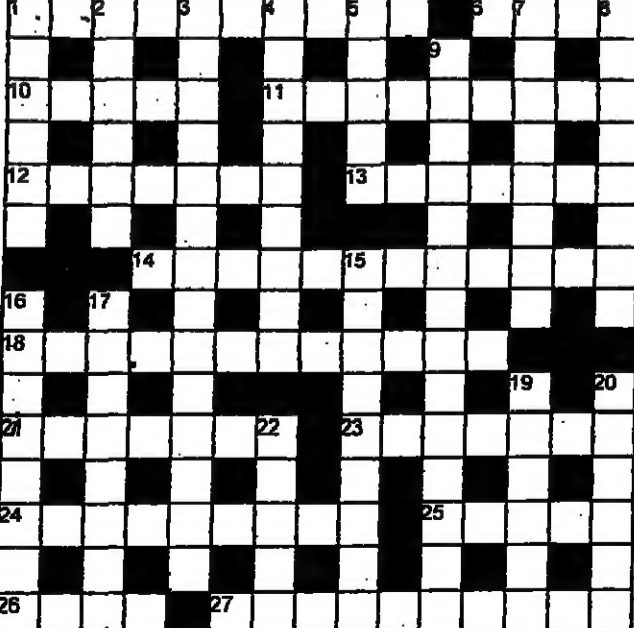
PRIME TIME TV

1	2	3	4	5	6
19:30 Garlic, Pepper and Olive Oil News With Meni	19:30 News	19:30 Melrose Place Friends	19:30 Loyal Opposition	19:30 Family Matters Married with Children	19:30 Beyond 2000 Behind the Lab Door
20:30 News	20:30 Focus	20:30 Beverly Hills 90210	20:30 Sentinel	20:30 Lois and Clark	20:30 Eight on Eight
21:30 Weekly Lotto Draw Docu-Media	21:30 Hot Mielal	21:30 Yair Lapid Live at 10	21:30 The Immortals	21:30 Love Songs	21:30 The Friendly Atom
22:30 The True Story: Michael and Robert	22:30 Seinfeld	22:30 Ricki Lake			22:30 Beyond 2000

19:35 Married with Children
20:30 The Fresh Prince of Bel Air
20:30 Full House
21:10 Lois and Clark
22:00 Love Songs (French, 1993) - a beautiful rock singer has an affair with a successful stage director on the rebound from a bad marriage. With Catherine Deneuve, Christopher Lambert, Mel Marceau and Jacques Perrin
22:45 The Left-Handed Gun (1958, 87 mins.) - Arthur Penn's first feature film, a psychological portrait of the career of Western outlaw Billy the Kid. With Paul Newman, Lita Ståhl and John Dehn

CRYPTIC CROSSWORD

ACROSS
1 Recoil now that the milder weather has returned? (6,4)
6 In a dreadful state (4)
10 Set sail without a meal (5)
11 A lady to suit you? (9)
12 Gurgling sound from southern queen by the Spanish church (7)
13 Dog's tip (7)
14 The colour of Ireland? (7,5)
18 Stop, ended confusion about engineers when it was seized for military use (12)
21 Turn round and rue disastrous upbringing! (7)



SOLUTIONS

Yesterday's Quick Solution
ACROSS: 1 Comedy, 4 Dover, 5 Capes, 8 Rostrum, 10 Elevate, 11 Yeti, 12 Fat, 14 Knee, 15 Rich, 18 New, 21 Load, 23 Romance, 25 Scarer, 26 Ovary, 27 Yield, 28 Kennel.
DOWN: 1 Caches, 2 Unpleasant, 3 Threaten, 4 Dunk, 5 Verse, 6 Remains, 7 Brief, 13 Trombones, 16 Contain, 17 Glossy, 19 Write, 20 Reveal, 22 Anzore, 24 Clad.

QUICK CROSSWORD

ACROSS
1 Firmly fixes ship (7)
5 Not at home (4)
7 Late (5)
8 As a result of this (6)
10 Strong wind (4)
11 Estate (8)
13 Bareness (6)
14 Promise (6)
17 Shell fragments (8)
19 Maple genus (4)
21 Abundance (6)
22 Brute (anag) (5)
23 Way out (4)
24 Dim (7)

DOWN
1 Hostility (10)
2 Coagulated (7)
3 African antelope (4)
4 Globe (6)
5 Suddenly (8)
6 Cautionary light (5)
9 Keyboard machine (10)
12 Hurry! (4,2,2)
15 Unit of sound (7)
16 East African (8)
18 Take it easy (5)
20 Cot (4)

MOVIES

JERUSALEM CINEMATHEQUE The Mask of Zorro 5, 7:30, 9:30. In The Realm of the Masks: Factory Movies 5, 7:30, 9:30. The Girl 9:45. G.G. Gil Jerusalem Mail (Malha) = 6788448 Practical Magic-The Truman Show 4:45, 7:15, 9:30. ANTZ-Ronin-Sliding Doors 4:45, 7:15, 9:30. The Negotiator 4:30, 7:15, 9:30. Saving Private Ryan 6, 9:30. The Big Lebowski 10, 12:30. Small Soldiers 4:45, 7:15, 9:30. Studio 54 5, 7:15, 9:30. RAV-GAR 1-2 = 874511 Rounders 7, 9:30. Snake Eyes 7:15, 9:30. RAV-MOR 1-7 = 8416898 Rounders 4:30, 7:15, 9:30. Life is Beautiful 4:45, 7:15, 9:30. Studio 54-Snake Eyes 5, 7:15, 9:30. Holy Man 7:30, 9:30. There's Something About Mary 5:45, 7:30, 9:30. Ever After 4:30, 7:15, 9:30. RAV-OR 1-3 = 8246553 Next Stop Wonderland 5, 7:15, 9:30. Life is Beautiful 4:45, 7:15, 9:30. Ever After 4:30, 7:15, 9:30. RAV-CHEN 1-3 = 874511 Rounders 7, 9:30. Snake Eyes 7:15, 9:30. RAV-MOR 1-7 = 8416898 Rounders 4:30, 7:15, 9:30. Life is Beautiful 4:45, 7:15, 9:30. Studio 54-Snake Eyes 5, 7:15, 9:30. 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